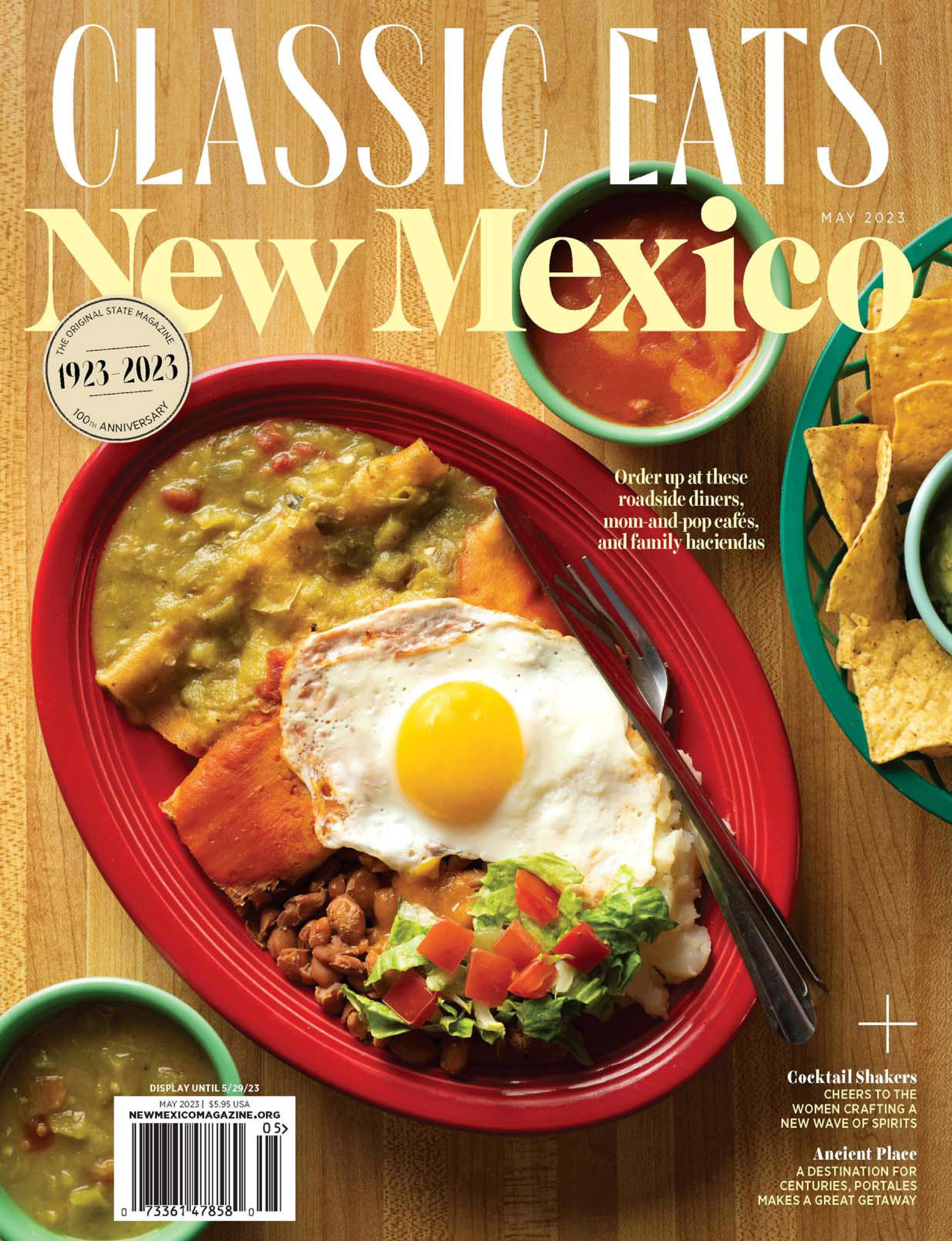

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MAY 2023

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1923–2023

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From top: Eagle Dancers performing at Indian Market, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1991, courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), neg. no. HP.2014.14.676. Young visitors at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science. Jar, Acoma Pueblo or Laguna Pueblo, ca. 1910, gift of Juan Olivas, MIAC 12024/12, photograph by Addison Doty. Jaguar mask, ca. 1960, Mexico, gift of the Girard Foundation Collection (A.1979.17.768), Museum of International Folk Art.

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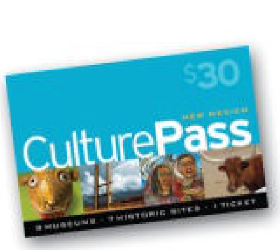

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VOLUME 101 | ISSUE 4

FEATURES

MAY 2023

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¡Viva la Cocina!

From roadside diners to downtown drive-ins, ancestral haciendas to mom-and-pop cafés, these iconic restaurants tell tales.

By Molly Boyle, Lynn Cline, Julian Dossett, Karen Fischer, Gregory R.C. Hasman, and Jennifer C. Olson

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In Relation to All Things

In the Gila Wilderness, the life and death of a raven tells a larger story of devotion.

By Jennifer Douglass

ON THE COVER
Huevos rancheros at Duran Central Pharmacy, in Albuquerque.
Photograph by
Douglas Merriam

THIS PAGE
At Horseman's Haven, in Santa Fe, enjoy a spicy breakfast burrito with green chile and home fries.

Photograph by **DOUGLAS MERRIAM**

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THE COURTHOUSE CAFE
NOTICE
The General Lee's Chili Cheese
A pile of frys topped with our home made Chili, shredded cheese, topped with two beef patties, sauteed onion, bacon, tomatoes & Jalepenos

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One of Our 50 Is Missing

Yes, it's a state. No passport required.

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NEWMEXICOMAGAZINE.ORG

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Blend an archaeological playdate with craft beer, WPA art, and sci-fi fun.

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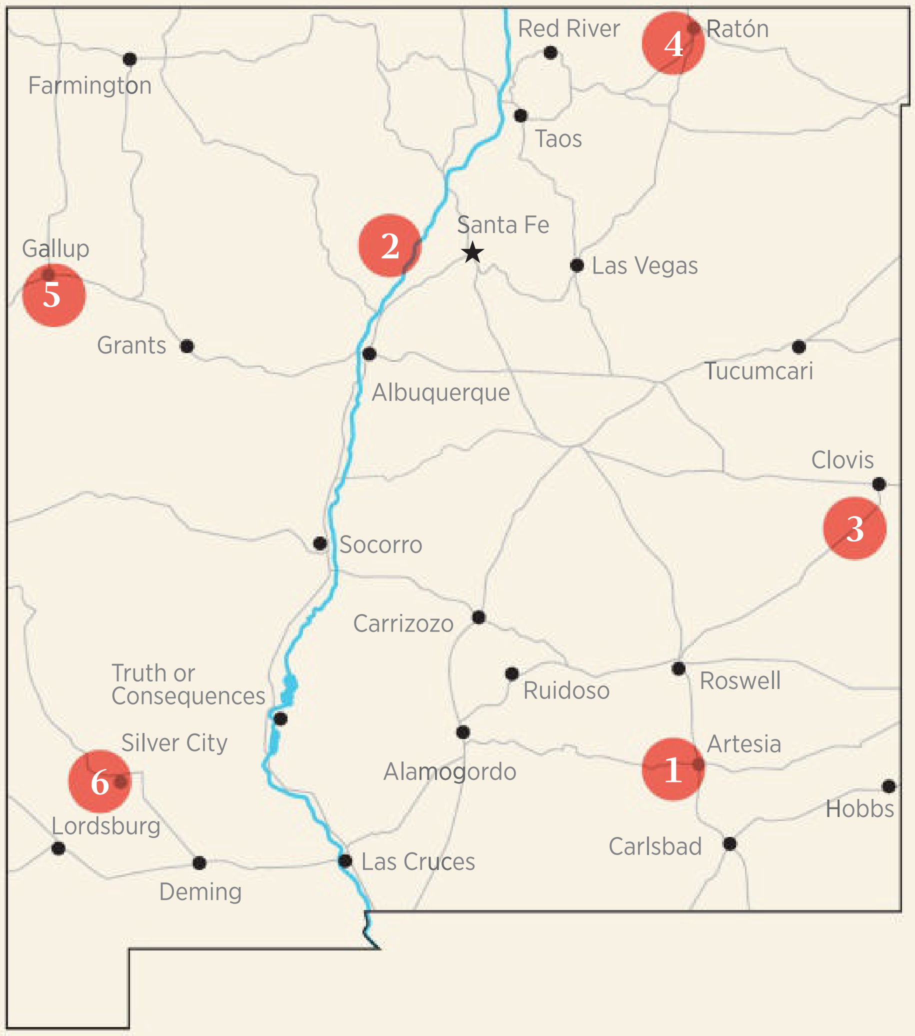
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Full Service

Santa Fe's Horseman's Haven is the stuff of legend, known from here to Hatch for its fiery green chile. Owned and operated by the Romero family since 1981, this is the place that brought Anthony Bourdain—the late no-fear chef, culinary explorer, and adventurous world traveler—to tears with its Level 3 chile on his *Parts Unknown* TV series.

But like the other locals filling up the booths, long tables, and counter overlooking the semi-open kitchen, I've come for Saturday breakfast. Black coffee. Carne adovada and eggs. Since it's my first time here, how can I not at least try a side of the Level 2 green chile, right? What kind of New Mexican would I be?

So when our orders come, I dip my fork into the chile, scoop up some hash browns, and take a bite. Almost instantly, my body produces some kind of culinary fight-or-flight response. As Bourdain says in the *Parts Unknown* episode: "First, you think it's going to be okay. Then it's not."

My eyes water, my face hurts. I start hiccuping. I look around the room, hoping no one is watching. Only then do I notice a couple of other warning signs: servers all wearing T-shirts printed with "Hottest Green Chile Around" and vintage boxing posters (yes, it feels like I've been punched in the mouth) sprinkled among the horse-themed decor.

Bourdain's advice? "There's nothing to do but wait it out." I try. The coffee makes it worse. More potatoes? Nope. Tortilla? Nada. Only a bite of the carne adovada's smoky-sweet red chile helps curb the torrent. The hiccups stop, but my right eye continues to water. Eventually, it passes.

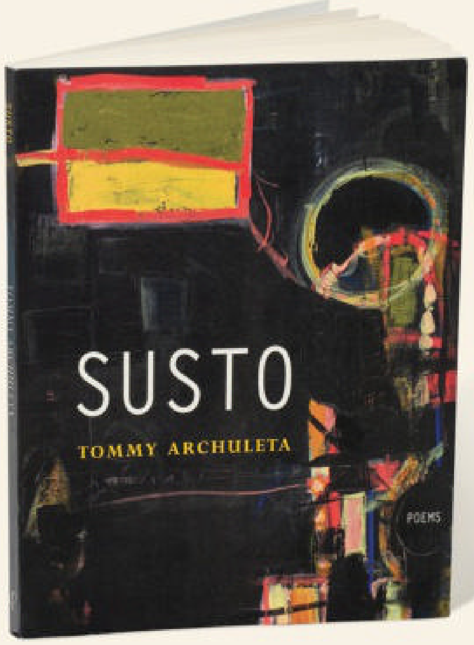
With some experimentation, I find that a bit of the Level 2 mixed into the red hits just right, and I devour every last bite. Saturday-morning mission accomplished.

In this month's "¡Viva la Cocina!" cover story (page 38), we dig into what makes a restaurant a New Mexico classic. Like the food itself, the ingredients are simple: cherished recipes and time-honored techniques, generations of family welcoming guests, longtime and trusted employees, deep roots in the community, and a passion for hard work. But it takes just the right amount of love to make it all come together—and the right amount of award-winning green chile. Enjoy!

Steve Gleydura
Editor in Chief
editor@nmmagazine.com

WHAT TO READ THIS MONTH

After poet Tommy Archuleta's mother died, he found a heavily marked-up homemade book on curanderismo among her things. That mixture of ancestral and herbal lore informs his sensorily elegiac new collection, ***Susto*** (University Press of Colorado). Interstitial poems called *Remedios* recur throughout dreamlike verses, doling out advice for protective and transcendent spells. Light a candle while you read: The mood is by turns ceremonial and languid, a flickering of light through darkness. Archuleta, who lives on Cochiti land, writes, "the darker/ life becomes the more you//find forms/of silence//you never/ before knew existed."
—*Molly Boyle*



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STORYTELLERS

Kate Nelson

DESTINATIONS, P. 28

After acing gigs as a newspaper reporter (*Albuquerque Tribune*), TV host (KNME-TV's *In Focus*), radio commentator (NPR's *Weekend Edition Sunday*), and book author (*Helen Hardin: A Straight Line Curved*), Kate Nelson joined us in 2016 as managing editor. Her work has won many International Regional Magazine Association awards, including Writer of the Year in 2021. She recently retired to pursue new adventures but vows to continue covering the state she loves best. "I often put #bestjobever in my Facebook posts, and I meant it," she says. "The magazine deepened my passion for New Mexico—its people, history, down-home diners, and crazy little delights you only find by being there."

Lynn Cline

¡VIVA LA COCINA!, P. 38

Growing up in Princeton, New Jersey, Lynn Cline had never heard of New Mexico chile until she moved to Santa Fe in 1993. Now she eats it all the time—red, green, preferably Christmas. Writing about food is the tastiest part of her work. Her books include *The Maverick Cookbook: Iconic Recipes and Tales from New Mexico* and *Literary Pilgrims: The Santa Fe and Taos Writers' Colonies, 1917–1950.* She co-edited the *New Mexico Magazine Centennial Cookbook: A Century of Flavors*, to be published next month. "The stories of the hardworking people who own New Mexico's classic restaurants have shown just how much heart and soul, along with tradition and history, is poured into every meal," she says.

Michael Abatemarco

ART, P. 68

Back in 1994, Michael Abatemarco hopped a Greyhound bus from New York City to New Mexico. After working in museum security at the Museum of International Folk Art and the New Mexico Museum of Art, both in Santa Fe, he began a career as an arts journalist. He has written for *ARTnews, El Palacio*, and the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, and he says, "The biggest parallel I've found between guarding and arts writing is in seeing and learning to see." His favorite season in New Mexico is spring. "When the lilacs are in bloom and the fruit trees blossom, I feel transported. I could be in Europe, on the Mediterranean coast, in Spain, or in Mexico. Santa Fe's a magical place."

New Mexico
MAGAZINE

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ESCAPE ROOMS

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STORIES BY LYNN CLINE, JULIAN DOSSETT, LANEE LEE, MARIA MANUELA, AND ELIZABETH MILLER

Attitude of Gratitude

I just received the March issue—always great, refreshing, inspiring. I read the article "Escape Rooms" with envy because our guest cabin definitely could have been included. In 2018, we finished building an incredible cabin out of native lumber, beams that I milled myself. It's still standing after we were caught in the middle of the now-famous Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak fire last May. I appreciate the magazine, big time. Tall trees, pristine creeks, snow-capped mountains, orchards, acequias … we are truly blessed with so much here in this great state. Keep up the wonderful work.

JOHN BARTLEY
Rociada

Learning from Women

New Mexico Magazine is the only print or online magazine I read cover to cover the day it arrives. I really like the feature articles. The photography contest issues that you publish should be coffee-table books. They are glorious. In the March issue, I especially learned a great deal from reading your special section, "Celebrating New Mexico's Trailblazing Women." Congratulations on the 100th anniversary of this great publication.

JERRY FLACK
Denver, Colorado

BRB, Going to the Library

"Celebrating New Mexico's Trailblazing Women" was a great addition to the March issue. I suggest that Ruth Wyly Armstrong merits mention. She was a prolific author and tireless promoter of New Mexico through books, magazines, newspapers, and finally, films. Her first published article was about an adobe home in Placitas, published by *New Mexico Magazine* in 1951, and she published seven books about New Mexico. She died in 1993.

DIANA ARMSTRONG
Moscow, Idaho

WE POSTED A CENTURY'S WORTH OF COVERS ON OUR WEBSITE, AND READERS LOVED IT. SEE FOR YOURSELF AT *NMMAG.US/100.*

I remember when my dad printed the magazine in the 1940s at Ward Anderson Printing Company, in Albuquerque. He was so proud of how good it looked.

MARGIE McCURRY
Albuquerque

A Dirty Job

Thank you for sharing this beautiful story ("Las Acequias," March) about how rich our culture is. We have had the pleasure of cleaning the acequia near our Milagro Goat Farm, in Truchas, where we make soaps from Nubian goat's milk. Whoever has cleaned an acequia at least once knows it will humble you real fast.

ZACHARY VANCUREN
Truchas

All in the Family

What an interesting story about "The Pacheco Chair" (January/February). The chair hearkens back to the Spanish Colonial furniture my wife's grandfather, Federico Valenzuela, crafted circa 1935–1950. He made a living as owner of the Carlsbad Tortilla Factory. Some of his pieces are still around in the family, sturdy as stone. His old product labels were recently accessioned into the Museum of New Mexico.

CRAIG SPRINGER
Albuquerque

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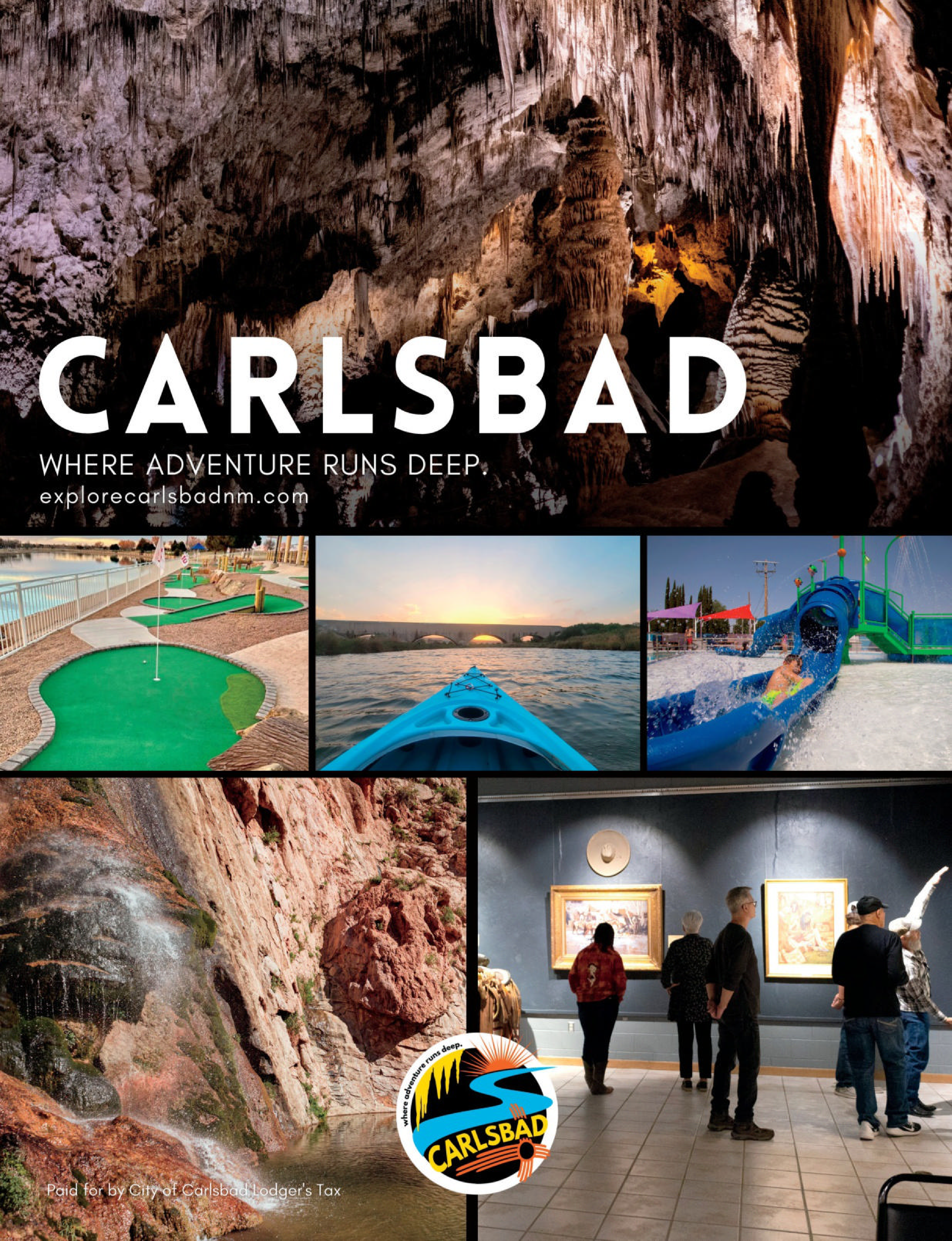
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MAY

DATEBOOK
A LOOK BACK
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Color Your World

This month, keep an eye out for giant red paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*), a denizen of high alpine meadows and a favorite wildflower of black-chinned hummingbirds. Look for these blooms to last through the summer, and check out Christina Selby's conservation-focused *Piñon Country* exhibition of photographs at the Santa Fe Botanical Garden, April 29 through November 26. *nmmag.us/pinoncountry*

Photographs by **CHRISTINA SELBY**

Monsoon cloud cover makes the bright red of the foothills paintbrush pop on the shortgrass prairie surrounding Wagon Mound. Eastern grasslands wildflowers peak early; look for blooms through May.

Ghost Town Blues Band

That's not all May has in store! Go to **nmmag.us/events** for more.

Blues Traveler

The Silver City Blues Festival might just be the ultimate jam session. Normally a three-day gathering of guitar pickers, honky-tonks, and blues bands in the artsy mountain town, the event this year gets packed into a single Saturday. With five bands performing at Gough Park, "it's the largest festival in the community," says Stephen Lindsey, event coordinator for the fest. The Memphis ensemble Ghost Town Blues Band, which recently released its fifth album, *Shine*, headlines a lineup that includes Silver City locals Blues Dawg and the Tyron Benoit Band from Louisiana. Beyond the music, the festival cranks up a makers' market, beer gardens, glassblowing competition, and more. "We get a very diverse group of people," Lindsey says. —*Maria Manuela*

SILVER CITY BLUES FESTIVAL
May 27, 11 a.m.—8:30 p.m.
Gough Park, 1201 N. Pope St., Silver City
silvercitybluesfest.org

Tyron Benoit

Get fired up. While live music heats up the stage, the glassblowing should make for some fiery competition. "The Flame Off shows expert and adept glassblowing artists demonstrating their skills," Lindsey says. "And the crowd gets to vote for the winner."

Party on. Catch additional performances on Friday and Saturday night at venues like Little Toad Creek Brewery & Distillery and Q's Southern Bistro. "We want to make it a fun weekend with things throughout downtown Silver City," Lindsey says.

Play date. When he was a kid, Lindsey looked forward to the festival each year. Because of that, Saturday includes an area for crafts, face painting, and a bouncy house. "We want to make sure we have a fun time for children," he says.

ART MARKETS

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Red River Motorcycle Rally

5/5–5/7

Truth or Consequences Fiesta

Every year since 1950, T or C gathers downtown for a rodeo, parade, petting zoo, disc golf tournament, block parties, live music, movie screenings, and beer gardens. ***nmmag.us/torcfiesta***

5/6–5/7

Magdalena Open Gallery Tour

More than 50 artists display their work in 15 locations throughout Magdalena during the 10th annual event. Check out gallery exhibits, meet artists, and watch demonstrations. ***artmagdalenanm.com***

5/11–5/14

Tico Time Bluegrass Festival

A heaping helping of live music comes to Aztec during this festival, which offers yoga, workshops, rafting, and a zip line. ***ticotimebluegrassfest.com***

5/25–5/29

Red River Motorcycle Rally

Vroom, vroom! More than 20,000 bikers ride into the mountains for the 41st annual Red River Motorcycle Rally. Vendors set up shop with handmade goods, live musicians perform at bars and venues throughout town, and the fun revs up to full throttle. ***nmmag.us/rrrally***

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A Look Back: May 1996

RUIDOSO'S FREE SPIRIT • GALLUP ON FOOT
NEW MEXICO
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IRIS SPRING
Healing Herbs
Mescal Roast

ON THE COVER
Russell Bamert shot our cover image of 'Faded Denim' irises at the Iris Ranch, near Cerrillos.

Mescal Roast

An Apache rite of spring. ***By Susan Arritt***

The crisp dawn light of mid-May sparkles as 20 or so Mescalero Apaches amble across the dusty Chihuahuan Desert in search of a thorny-leafed succulent called mescal. Some carry hatchets, others tote oak staves and sledgehammers, still others roll up their sleeves for the work ahead. Following in ancient footsteps, this harvest party's job is to collect the tribe's yearly bounty of mescal, which medicine man Nathaniel Chee reverently calls "the most valuable food of the Mescalero people."

Ultimately bound for the reservation near Ruidoso, the fruits of today's labor will be the star attraction during the next four days at the annual Friends of the Living Desert Mescal Roast, a public event held at the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park in Carlsbad.

In the arid, ancestral wandering lands of the Mescalero Apaches, springtime's awakening has long heralded the coming of harvest time for the plant coveted for centuries as the tribal staff of life. A staple source of nourishment with roughly the same food value as oats, the weighty heads of mescal were roasted, then eaten warm, or sun-dried and saved for lean seasons or as a C ration of sorts, for times on the move.

Nothing was wasted. Mescal leaves provided fiber for woven articles, and tough leaf spears served as leather-piercing awls or razor-sharp weapons. So intimately entwined was the desert-dwelling mescal with the lives of the Apaches who roamed where the plant flourished—the lower Río Grande and Pecos River valleys; the foothills of the Guadalupe, Sacramento, and San Andres mountains; and southward through West Texas into Mexico—that early Spanish explorers called the nomadic people *mescaleros*, or "mescal makers."

Known to taxonomists as *Agave neomexicana*, the mescal plant is one of several species of agaves native to the Land of Enchantment. It blooms once during its 12- to 16-year lifetime—a far cry from the hundred years intimated by its misleading nickname, the century plant. In a matter of days, a 10- to 20-foot stalk shoots upward, then the plant quickly dies after a swan-song burst of striking orange-yellow flowers on high. …

With such strong links between the Mescaleros and New Mexico's mescal plant, it is no wonder that some tribal elders remain determined to continue the harvest and accompanying roast rituals. Their resolve has been difficult, for they face an immutable law of nature: Within the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation, which spreads across the forested Sacramento Mountains, mescal plants are simply not abundant.

See the full version of this story at ***newmexicomagazine.org.***

Mescal roast
An Apache rite of spring
by Susan Arritt • photography by Susan Hazen-Hammond

THE ORIGINAL STATE MAGAZINE
1923–2023
100TH ANNIVERSARY

INGA HENDRICKSON

Bees, a Honey of an Insect

On an early spring morning one can observe much activity around the beehive. All insects are coming to life, but the bees are the most numerous at one given spot, so you notice them the most. They are crowding out of the dark interior of their dwelling, launching themselves into the sunny air. I watch from a distance and have great respect for them … Recently I find more and more recipes that use honey in place of sugar, but I still like my honey best with fresh bread of any kind. *—Adela Amador*

HONEY DROP COOKIES

Makes 4½ dozen cookies

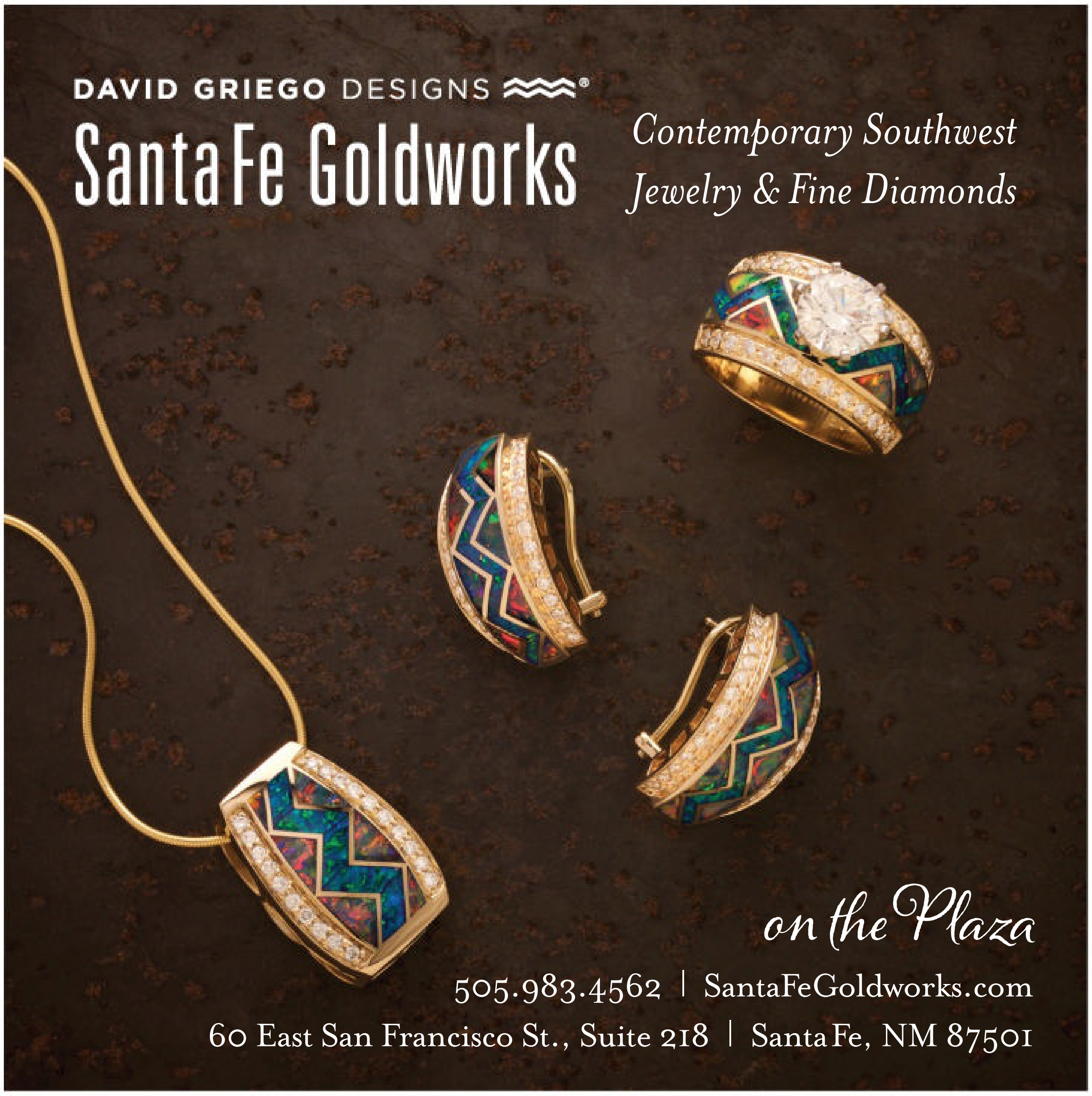
- **¼ cup butter**
- **¾ cup honey**
- **1 egg**
- **2 cups flour**
- **½ teaspoon salt**
- **½ teaspoon baking powder**
- **2 tablespoons milk**
- **1 cup chopped nuts**
- **1 cup raisins, chopped**

1. Cream butter. Add honey and beaten egg and beat until fluffy.
2. Sift flour, measure, and add salt and baking powder. Sift again. Add chopped nuts and raisins to flour mixture.
3. Add dry ingredients alternately with milk to creamed mixture. Mix thoroughly.
4. Drop by teaspoonful onto greased baking sheet, spaced 2 to 3 inches apart. Bake at 350° for 12 to 15 minutes.

QUOTABLE

"If colors were audible, the foothills near Cerrillos would burst into a remarkable melody—vibrant, yet muted, strong but delicate—each May, when patchwork fields of radiant blossoms mingle with native vegetation on the grounds of the Iris Ranch."

—from "Iris Spring," by Pamela Porter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Clockwise from top left: Colum McCann, Sally Denton, Michael McGarrity, Ingrid Rojas Contreras, Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, David Treuer

COURTESY OF THE AUTHORS

Page Turners

Writers, readers, and storytellers from around the globe converge at the Santa Fe International Literary Festival. ***By Jennifer Levin***

How's this for a plot twist? After a successful first year, the Santa Fe International Literary Festival returns—but with a new name and broader reach. With the addition of "international" to its moniker, the festival hopes to emphasize the universal nature of storytelling. Critically acclaimed writers from around the world join American novelists John Irving, Jennifer Egan, and Gillian Flynn for readings and author conversations, an open mic, culinary and cocktail events, and walking tours May 19–21. "SFILF is about bringing readers and authors together—from around the world and close to home—to celebrate our shared humanity," says festival co-founder Clare Hertel. Here are six storytellers you don't want to miss.

SANTA FE INTERNATIONAL LITERARY FESTIVAL
May 19–21
Santa Fe Community Convention Center, 201 W. Marcy St., Santa Fe
sfinternationallitfest.org

THE KICKOFF

Colum McCann

Dublin-born Colum McCann won the 2009 National Book Award for *Let the Whole World Spin*. His deeply empathetic 2020 novel *Apeirogon* tells the story of two fathers who come together through the loss of their daughters in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. "*Apeirogon* may be his most transcendent novel yet," says Mark Bryant, the festival's chief curator. "It speaks to love, loss, compassion, and friendship anywhere. It's utterly wondrous."

Friday, 6:30 p.m.

LOCAL TALENT

Sally Denton and Michael McGarrity

Santa Fe investigative reporter and historian Sally Denton joins Michael McGarrity, New Mexico author of the best-selling Kevin Kerney crime series, in a conversation on crime, punishment, cops, and journalists. Denton's *The Colony: Faith and Blood in a Promised Land* (2022) looks at the 2019 killings of nine women and children in a fundamentalist Mormon sect in northern Mexico. "Sally is such a bold and exacting reporter," says Bryant. "She sure knows how to tell a story."

Saturday, 2 p.m.

NATIVE HISTORY

David Treuer

Barack Obama named David Treuer's *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* one of the best books of 2019. From the Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota, Treuer (Ojibwe) has written seven novels and has written for *Travel + Leisure*, *Esquire*, and the *New York Times*. "*The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee* blends history with deep reporting and memoir in an essential portrait of a resilient people in brutal, trying times," Bryant says.

Saturday, 2 p.m.

BRONX TALE

Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah

Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah's debut short-story collection, *Friday Black*, was a bestseller in 2018, the same year he was chosen as one of the National Book Foundation's "5 Under 35." His first novel, *Chain-Gang All-Stars*, is an Afro-surrealist take on the future of incarceration. "It's satire at its bruising best," Bryant says. "His book is just so original, so brutal, tender, clear-eyed, and full of voice."

Saturday, 3:30 p.m.

MAGIC AND MEMORY

Ingrid Rojas Contreras

Colombia-born Ingrid Rojas Contreras followed her debut novel, *Fruit of the Drunken Tree* (2018), with the luminous family history and National Book Award finalist *The Man Who Could Move Clouds* (2022). "Ingrid is a blazingly good writer," Bryant says. "I'm keen to read whatever comes next."

Sunday, 2 p.m.

Memories worth making.
Santa Fe
NM TRUE
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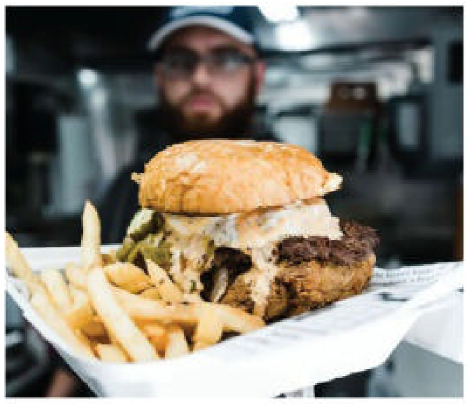
Spice of Life

A food truck empire grows in Albuquerque, helped along by a few big-time honors. ***By Molly Boyle***

For New Mexico food historians, the moment was unprecedented. Last fall, Tikka Spice did what no other restaurant had done: The four-year-old Albuquerque food truck took home the triple crown of culinary honors from the annual Green Chile Cheeseburger Smackdown, beating out 15 other contenders to nab the distinctions of Reigning Chomp, Secret Judges' Award, and People's Choice.

"It was a total shocker, winning that," Tikka Spice owner Basit Gauba remembers. "We were up against some pretty heavy hitters." The momentum generated by the Smackdown trifecta has since fueled a new venture: a food truck called Stackers Burger Co., which sells a lineup that includes the award-winning Duke City Smash Burger. Of the recipe that made his green chile cheeseburger a juggernaut, the Pakistan-born Gauba will only say that he combines several heat levels of Bueno chile to achieve consistency.



Stackers, Tikka Spice, and another sister restaurant, KūKri Chicken (located in 505 Central Food Hall), are all properties of Gauba's growing fusion-food fleet under the Tikka Spice umbrella. Gauba specializes in what he calls "Desi street food," infusing South Asian flavors into portable eats such as tacos, fried chicken sandwiches, and burgers. Whole spices are imported from India, then roasted and ground at Tikka Spice's commissary. Earlier this year, Gauba, who has never had any formal culinary training, racked up another honor as the only Albuquerque chef to be nominated for a 2023 James Beard award.

Inspired by the movie *Chef*, Gauba began Tikka Spice as a pop-up for community events. "Nobody in New Mexico does a halal green chile cheeseburger or a halal chicken sandwich," he says. "We wanted to offer that to the people." After becoming the third owner of a former horse trailer, he outfitted it as a food truck using "a lot of YouTube tutorials," then built Tikka Spice's reputation on chicken tikka tacos, served with pickled onions and mint raita sauce. Butter chicken and chickpea curries followed, along with a spicy fried chicken sandwich—which ignited the KūKri Chicken spinoff, centered on extra-hot tikka tender sammies.

Although Tikka Spice's Albuquerque brick-and-mortar location closed when its lease expired, Stackers will open in a space downtown later this year, while KūKri will gain a truck. Gauba posts the trucks' schedules online, noting that customers' orders change depending on where each eatery ends up. "When we're downtown, it's chicken sandwiches and tacos. In Nob Hill, it's vegetarian stuff, like the chana masala bowl. In Corrales, we sling burgers all day long."

People come prepared for the heat. "Our food is very unapologetic," Gauba says. "It's going to be spicy."

TIKKA SPICE
tikkaspiceabq.com

STACKERS BURGER CO.
stackersabq.com

KŪKRI CHICKEN AT 505 CENTRAL FOOD HALL,
505 Central Ave. SW, Albuquerque; 505-582-8891,
kukriabq.com

TIKKA SPICE
2022 SMACKDOWN GREEN CHILE CHEESEBURGER SMACKDOWN PEOPLE'S CHOICE
2022 SMACKDOWN GREEN CHILE CHEESEBURGER SMACKDOWN REIGNING CHOMP
2022 SMACKDOWN GREEN CHILE CHEESEBURGER SMACKDOWN SECRET JUDGES' AWARD

From top: Tikka Fries. Spicy Chicken Tikka Sandwich with an egg and cheese. The Duke City Smash Burger. The Tikka team.

COURTESY OF TIKKA SPICE, @DRUNKEN.SUNFLOWER

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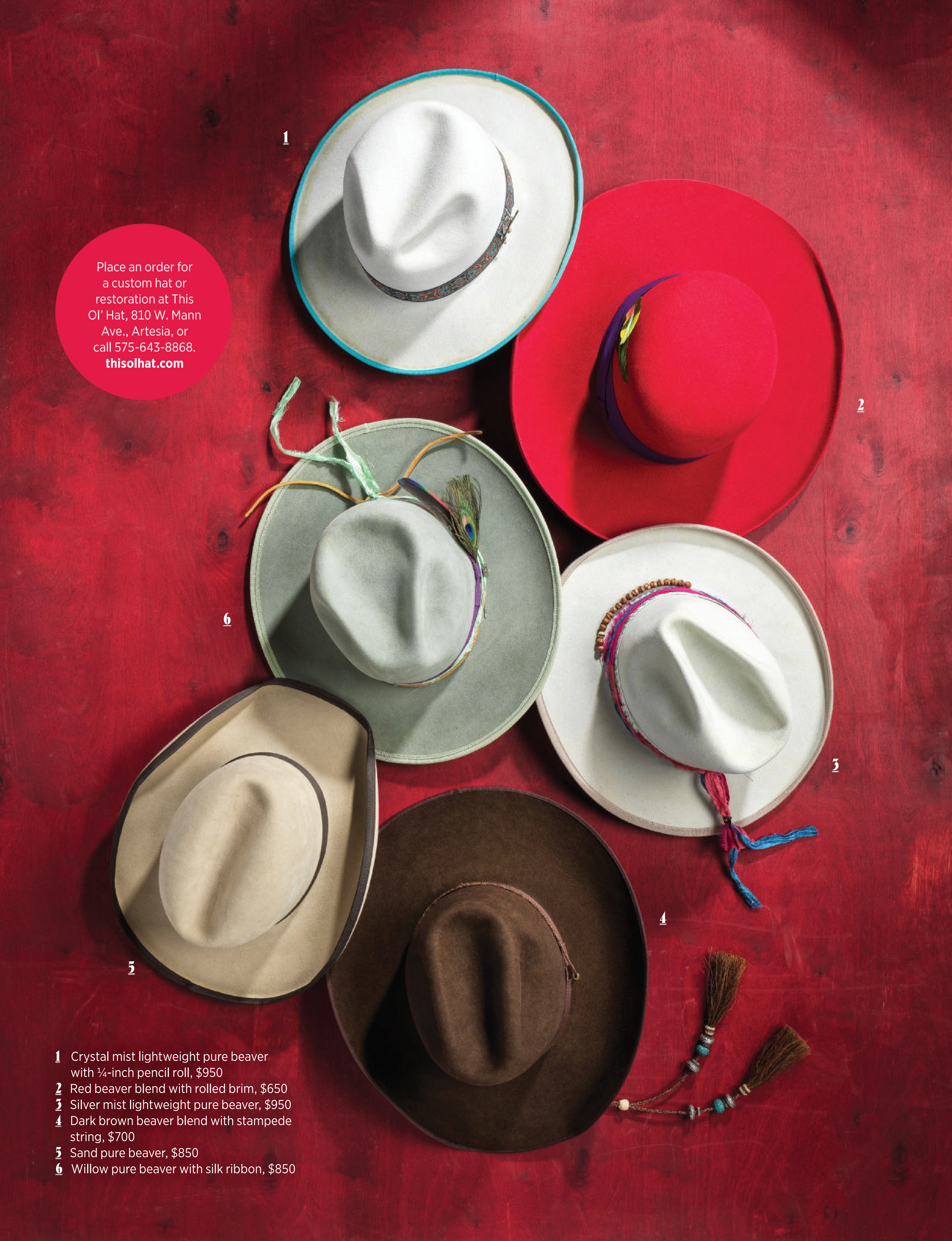

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Shop

Wide Brims

A former livestock foreman living in Artesia crafts custom Western hats built to last. **By Julian Dossett**

"Cowboys always wore their hats out of necessity," says Barney Coppedge, owner of This Ol' Hat, in Artesia. "To keep the sun off your face and the rain off your head." After 28 years spent working as the livestock foreman on Vermejo Park Ranch, in Colfax County, Coppedge moved to Artesia to be closer to family and took up his new trade. "Everything I do is by hand," he says. "I know every square centimeter of that felt."

Decades of ranch work honed Coppedge's sensibilities on what makes a lasting, reliable hat. "I got to the point where I couldn't walk in a store and find the hat I wanted," he says. So Coppedge attended a Colorado workshop taught by Tom Hirt, who's created hats for many Western films, including the one worn by Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday in *Tombstone*. Working from home, Coppedge starts with chinchilla, mink, or beaver felt. ("Beaver fur just lasts a long time," he says.) He then carefully molds each hat using a wet-block method instead of a machine.

He keeps his output small—25 hats per year—to ensure quality. After seven years of hat-making, he still finds joy in his work. "These hats are made with love," Coppedge says. "When you give somebody a hat, they put it on, and they've got a big smile on their face—it's a lot of satisfaction."

Photograph by **INGA HENDRICKSON**

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SEE FOR YOURSELF
Celebrate Anthony Lovato and purchase his work at the Native Treasures Night Market on Friday, May 26, and all weekend at the Santa Fe Community Convention Center. **miac.eventbrite.com**

Silver Star

Santo Domingo Pueblo artist Anthony Lovato creates beautiful tufa cast jewelry inspired by his heritage and New Mexico surroundings.

BY IRIS McLISTER

JEWELER ANTHONY LOVATO DRAWS CREATIVE INSPIRATION FROM his rich family history of potters, basket weavers, and silversmiths. The fifth-generation Santo Domingo (Kewa) artist specializes in tufa casting, in which molten precious metal is poured into meticulously carved sandstone molds. The delicate practice not only imparts a striking, sandpaper-like texture; it also yields an intricate pattern that covers the inside and outside surfaces. A graduate of Santa Fe's Institute of American Indian Arts, Lovato worked at Flagstaff's Museum of Northern Arizona before returning to New Mexico in 1984. He has lived and worked on Santo Domingo Pueblo ever since. "I am constantly inspired by ancient petroglyphs," says Lovato. "I'm always visiting ruins to study them and to try to recreate their beauty." As part of this month's Native Treasures Art Market, Lovato is being honored as the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture's Living Treasure, which recognizes Native Americans who have made a significant impact on Indigenous arts and culture.

FAMILY IS EVERYTHING, from the lineage of artists in my family who came before me, down to my four sons, all of whom are following in my footsteps as artists.

ONE OF MY PROUDEST MOMENTS as an artist was on a flight heading home from Phoenix. I was wearing one of my bracelets, and the person sitting next to me said, "That looks like an Anthony Lovato design." It was surreal.

EVERYTHING ABOUT NEW MEXICO inspires me—the sun, the rivers, the trees, the mountains. It all mixes together and makes me feel so lucky our ancestors put us here.

I NEVER CONSIDER MYSELF A MASTER because I learn every day. As artists, I believe we never really finish what we want to do creatively, because there are too many ideas and life is too short.

IN MY FAMILY, CORN IMAGERY dates back for many generations. Southwestern pueblo family groups consist of individual clans, passed down matrilineally, and my mom was born into the Corn clan.

IT'S EASY TO BE INSPIRED BY CORN: It's nourishing, sustainable, and it gave my ancestors life.

IF I WASN'T A JEWELER, I might have picked up pottery, which Santo Domingo has been known for.

I WORKED at the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff, and I loved learning about Arizona and its people. I might as well be a Native American art historian, because over the years I've continued learning about all kinds of our peoples' art—from paintings to baskets.

THERE IS ALWAYS A SHOW around the corner I need to prepare for. More intricate pieces can easily take me a week to make, so I'm always working on something.

ONE THING ABOUT SANTO DOMINGO is how isolated it is. We're between Santa Fe and Albuquerque, and it's easy to drive right past us.

WHEN I'M AWAY FROM HOME, I miss normal life, which includes taking care of horses, cutting wood, hunting elk and mule deer, and being with family.

THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF TUFA CASTING is also the most rewarding. Working with sandstone and liquid metals is unpredictable. You're working in reverse, and you never know exactly how a piece will turn out, but that's what makes it so exciting.

MY GOAL AS AN ARTIST is to get the designs from my creative spirit to translate into a piece. When I can successfully actualize that vision, it's pretty exciting.

THE JEWELRY I MAKE IS AN INVESTMENT, and my advice to collectors is to do your research and discover why it's worth it.

Photograph by **TIRA HOWARD**

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35
RHINOUSA

FEATURED EVENTS

Turquoise Trail Pack Burro Race
May 6, Cerrillos

Set in the historic and scenic hills of Cerrillos, this burro race is one of only 14 in the entire country. Racers choose one of two courses, a 3-mile route or a longer 6-mile route that follows the Western Pack Burro Association race rules. Race starts at 10 a.m. on Main Street in the Village of Cerrillos and follows Cerrillos State Park trail.

RiverFest
May 26, Farmington

Celebrate area rivers with a festival of music, food, activities, and plenty of entertainment. This festive celebration takes place along the Animas River trails, from Berg Park to Animas Park in Farmington.

Silver City Blues Festival
May 27, Silver City

This Memorial Day weekend enjoy music, dancing, food, and more as national performers take the stage on Saturday for the Silver City Blues Festival. This FREE blues festival features the brightest rising stars of blues as well as classic, seasoned performers who have toured the world.

NEW MEXICO TRUE

DETAILS, DETAILS

LOCATION

Ancient Winds

People have sought food, comfort, and homes in Portales for centuries. Blend an archaeological playdate with craft beer, local wine, WPA-era art and architecture, and a sci-fi nerd bonanza.

By Kate Nelson

Photographs by **STEVEN ST. JOHN**

POPULATION	ELEVATION	PREHISTORY	PEANUT HARVEST
12,042	4,006	13,500	21 MILLION
PEOPLE	FEET	YEARS	POUNDS PER YEAR

THE PLAINS OF EASTERN NEW MEXICO begin bending into gentle hills and folds—grass-coated dunes, some of which are still “actively migrating,” says Brendon Asher. The archaeologist and director of the Blackwater Draw National Historic Landmark and Museum points through the car window to a pocket in the landscape. “There’s a site in that hole that’s 9,000 years old,” he says. “There’s archaeology everywhere here.”

We’re on our way to the apex of that ancient life, a 156-acre site that upended the timeline of human habitation in North America. At Blackwater Draw in 1929, a lonely five-mile drive north of Portales, Clovis rancher Ridgley Whiteman came upon evidence of people hunting animals that were far larger than anything he could have imagined. Just three years earlier, archaeologists had confirmed that ancient people killed off a species of bison near what is now the town of Folsom, some 240 miles north of Portales. That discovery pushed back the people-were-here clock to 10,000 years, and scientists were still struggling to wrap their heads around that fact.

But these were no *Bison antiquus* bones, Whiteman insisted. They were enormous. He eventually persuaded archaeologists to study what turned out to be the remains of mammoths, themselves extinct before Folsom people ever aimed an atlatl at their prey. What came to be termed “Clovis man” likely roamed this region as many as 13,500 years ago.

“It’s important because it links people to this landscape, and it demonstrates the ability of groups 13,000 years ago to navigate across a landscape that today is pretty barren, and return to it over time through generations,” Asher says. “How do you communicate to your child how to get here? People today have a hard time finding the site.”

BLACKWATER DRAW
Archaeological Site
National Historic Landmark
EASTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY

Clockwise from top left: Archaeologist and Blackwater Draw director Brendon Asher. Blackwater Draw National Historic Landmark and Museum. **Facing page:** Architectural details abound on the WPA-era Roosevelt County Courthouse.

PEANUT
STORE
RETAIL STORE
ROOS

Hundreds of people from around the world do find the national historic landmark, along with its accompanying museum, on the Eastern New Mexico University campus, in Portales. For a city whose entire population can't fill the University of New Mexico's basketball arena, that says something. But if instead you measure a city's size in heart—as well as in the tasty fare at locally owned restaurants, the cultural offerings and sci-fi attractions of the college, and the craft brews and local wine—then Portales stands tall.

"Our town may not be the best to look at, and we're very self-conscious about that," says Megan Hamilton, a founder of the family-owned Enchantment Vineyards. "But the people here are a blast."

Above: Stock up on Hampton Farms's locally grown peanuts.

THE LONG, COVERED EXCAVATION PIT AT THE Blackwater Draw site gives us a respite from the seemingly endless winds of the high plains. Inside, its two tiers illuminate human life in the region—mammoth bones jumbled in a rectangular pit, indicating Clovis people, and *Bison antiquus* bones on a ledge above it, evidence of Folsom people. None of them stayed long, Asher says. Instead, they made periodic loops to what was then a small lake in order to find food. Differences in spearpoints help archaeologists divide their eras—Clovis points versus Folsom points—as do other artifacts, including pottery, stockpiles of tools, and Folsom-era campsites.

In a small room at the museum, Asher pulls a variety of spearpoints and butchering tools from boxes held in a series of cabinets. Made from stone that comes from as far away as Utah, Wyoming, and Texas, they range in size from the length of a thumb to a large hand.

"People think you need a big point to kill a big animal," Asher says. "That's not necessarily the case."

Besides mammoths, Clovis people would have seen ground sloths, saber-toothed cats, dire wolves, pronghorn, and small camels—the prehistoric *Camelops hesternus*, one of which Asher hopes to excavate this summer with students and volunteers. That type of ongoing research is critical to understanding just what was going on all those years ago. "The Blackwater Draw site shows us two kill events separated by about 2,000 years," Asher says. "Each represents, in their lifetimes, a single day, maybe a single afternoon. We're

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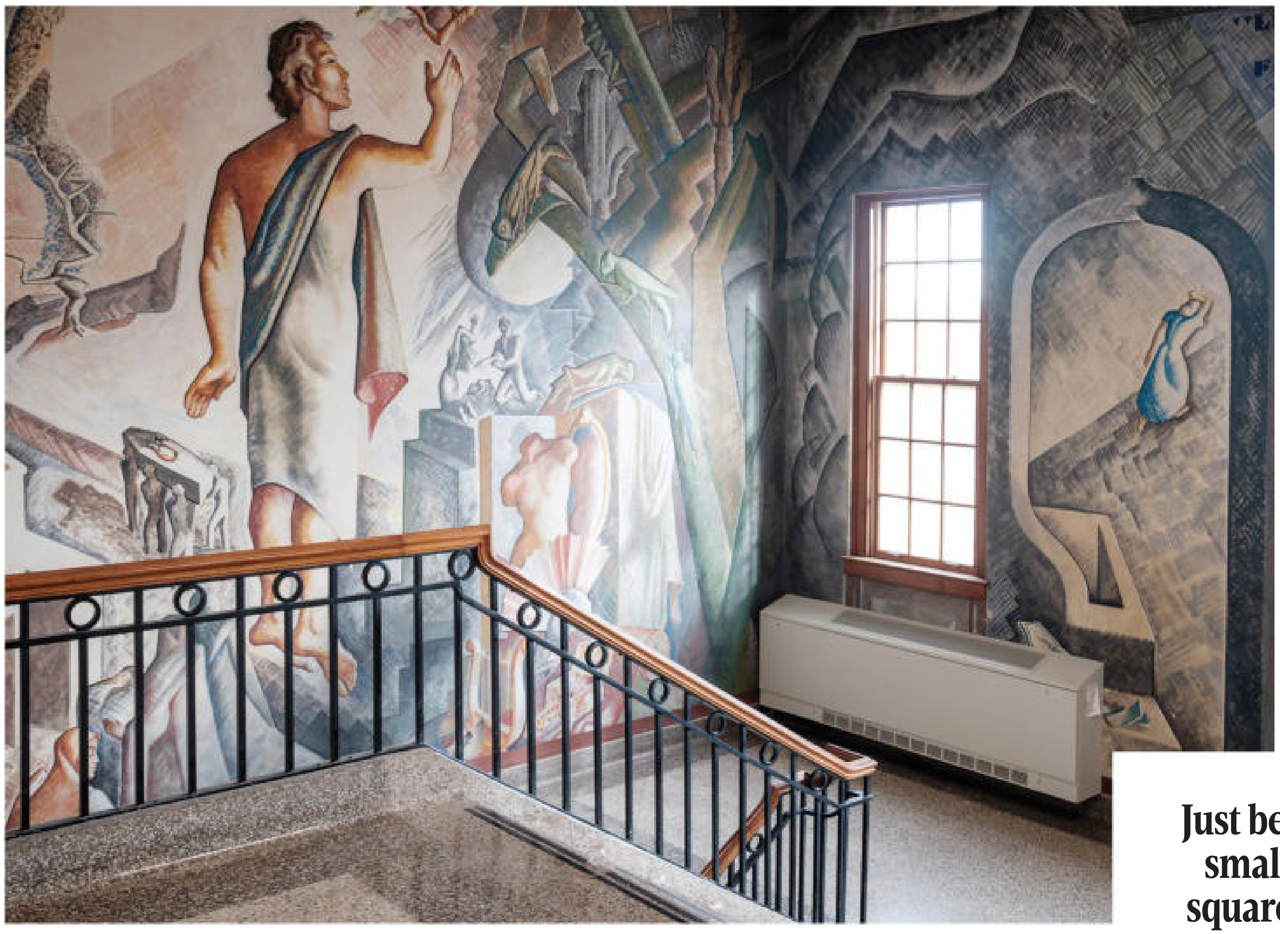

MILK
Raspberry
Gluten Free PB Cookie

From top: New Deal artist Lloyd Moylan created *The 12th Chapter of Ecclesiastes* mural over five months at Eastern New Mexico University. Mary Newell and Chris Parrish serve treats at the Courthouse Cafe.

missing so much of the picture.”

Drone photography has helped identify other potential sites, but many of them are on private land. East of Portales, near the Texas state line, the Grulla National Wildlife Refuge has yielded the grave of a young woman from about 11,000 years ago. The beads, ocher samples, and stone tools buried with her hint at what might have been a structured social order, one that held her in high esteem.

Comanche and Apache people later roamed throughout the region, which Spanish explorers dubbed the Llano Estacado, commonly translated as the Staked Plains. Among the most colorful naming theories is that the explorers had to hammer stakes into the mostly treeless plains in order to find their way back. Other theories contend that the name has to do with the geological escarpments that nearly ring the area.

The grassy plains represented manna to cattle ranchers, who put the first agricultural stamp on what became Portales. Later, peanut farms dotted the open lands, and most recently, dairies have grown into an economic force, thanks in part to favorable climate conditions for cows. Just beyond the town square, a set of grain silos emphasizes the lasting impact of the fruits of the land. Recently, one of the more decrepit silos could no longer age in place; residents lament its loss, says Jodi Diaz, executive director of the Roosevelt County Community Development Corporation.

Just beyond the small town’s square, a set of grain silos emphasizes the lasting impact of the fruits of the land.

From her office, we walk across the square, passing the handsome New Deal–era architecture of the Roosevelt County Courthouse, to pop in for cups of coffee at the Courthouse Cafe. It holds an array of coin-operated horses, cars, and spaceships—the kind that once bedecked grocery stores—along with a video-game arcade and the Happy Place, a gift shop that specializes in knitting supplies, teas, and herbal tinctures.

In the kitchen, owner Mary Newell hustles out another sheet of oversize cookies while I make a mental note to return later for one of the lunch rush’s freshly grilled sandwiches. Down the street, the Do Drop In whips up breakfast and lunch in a space with rustic-lodge vibes. Legend has it that the building’s basement was once used to store the first artifacts pulled from the Blackwater Draw site.

A few empty buildings pockmark the other small businesses on the square, but Diaz

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RIDE Shiloh

Clockwise from far left: Get treated like family at the Almost Home Bed & Breakfast. Ride a vintage coin-operated pony at the Courthouse Cafe. Cast a line at Oasis State Park.

takes an optimistic view of that. "There's opportunity here," she says.

Just off the square, the Roosevelt Brewing Company pours a Clovis Point IPA, among other quaffs. Signs of entrepreneurship crop up in an array of restaurants serving Jalisco- and/or Chihuahua-style Mexican food; at the Peanut Store, which sells locally grown peanuts and New Mexico–made salsas; and within the expansive walls of the Portales Fun Center. Inside the onetime Gibson's Discount Store, a high-tech bowling alley now nudges up to an arcade room, a roller-skating rink, golf simulators, shuffleboards, and pool tables, along with an outpost of Dickey's Barbecue Pit.

Almost Home Bed & Breakfast owners Gary and Judy Piepkorn joined the local business community in 2007, when they transformed their property's outbuildings into three comfy casitas, each with a full kitchen. Before then, Gary says, "We didn't know what to do with the spaces. But since then, we've had visitors from everywhere—academicians, musicians performing at the university, and people building wind farms who stayed here for months."

MEGAN HAMILTON AND HER FAMILY WERE enjoying a Napa Valley vacation when the wine began speaking to them. It told them to start a winery. Five years later, they bottle enough Enchantment Vineyards varieties to have expanded into a spacious tasting room built around Hamilton's grandfather's old peanut storage room, which now holds tables with inviting firepits. An upstairs meeting area features occasional shows by the High Plains Art Collective, and this spring and summer the owners plan to offer tango and salsa lessons. Last Christmas, they held a dance that included mechanical-bull rides.

"We want it to be very family-friendly—bring your kids, bring your dogs," says Hamilton's sister, Cassidy Self.

PLAINS SIGHTS

Explore. The **Blackwater Draw Museum**, on the Eastern New Mexico University campus, speaks to ancient life in the region and holds a bounty of artifacts. Ask about warm-weather hours at the Blackwater Draw site, which rely on the availability of students to work there. Tours can be scheduled. The **Roosevelt County Historical Museum**, also on campus, tells the stories of early settlers through artifacts like vintage farm equipment. (Other campus museums, including the Miles Mineral Museum, will reopen after an ongoing renovation.)

Find a deal. The **New Deal**, that is. Download a self-guided walking tour of New Deal–era art and architecture at **theclio.com/tour/2138**. It includes the Roosevelt County Courthouse and buildings on the ENMU campus. Stop in at the college's administration building to see an enormous mural by Lloyd Moylan that depicts the 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes, which, puzzlingly, says that "much study is a weariness of flesh."

Stay. Portales has a variety of chain hotels. For a cozier experience, book a suite at the **Almost Home Bed & Breakfast**, where the proprietors will prepare your morning meal or let you DIY it in your casita's kitchen.

Eat. On the first Friday of each month, food trucks cluster in the C&S automotive parts store parking lot for **Foodie Fridays** from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. The **Cattle Baron** maintains eastern New Mexico's standard for steaks and a robust salad bar. Grab freshly made breakfasts and lunches at the **Courthouse Cafe** and **Do Drop In**. Sate your chile desire at **Oralia's Taqueria**, a local fave for sit-down breakfast burritos.

Shop. Load up on stocking stuffers at the **Peanut Store**, starring roasted Valencia peanuts grown by Hampton Farms.

From skating the streets of Albuquerque –
all the way to the Olympics.
Mariah Duran
Olympic Skateboarder
NEW MEXICO TRUE

I ♥ TACOS
The Wall of What's up

Clockwise from top left: Explore the Eastern New Mexico University campus. Let James Idsinga pour you a taste at Enchantment Vineyards. Relax with a pint at Roosevelt Brewing Company. Try the green chile cheeseburger at the Taco Box.

Hamilton walks me through an area that currently holds the family's private pickleball court but will soon be filled with steel vats for their growing menu of varietals. "This is the passion project, which it has to be because it's not the profit project," she says with a laugh, alluding to the family's more stable ownership of hardware and furniture stores. "This brings us together as a family to do something crazy."

For "crazy" on display, I head over to the ENMU campus, where the archives center holds all the books and materials gathered by nationally noted science-fiction author Jack Williamson, a Portales native. The books alone fill 10 long rows of shelves, including a massive collection of Star Trek tomes with titles like *The Vulcan Academy Murders*. Most visitors ask archivist Regina Bouley Sweeten to pull out the first-draft script that eventually became *The Empire Strikes Back*, considered the best in the Star Wars opus by die-hard fans. (Pay attention when you're at the Blackwater Draw Museum, Bouley Sweeten advises: A pair of 15-foot-long spears there came from the "Galileo Seven" episode of *Star Trek*, when Mr. Spock declared that they "look like a Clovis spearpoint.")

I end my visit by dropping into that evening's basketball doubleheader by the ENMU men's and women's teams. Courtside seats are a snap to grab, and while I watch the Greyhound women wipe the floor with that night's opponent, the new university president, James Johnston, wanders down to join me. "I absolutely love it here," he says. "When the game is over, the kids will walk around and thank everyone in the stands. It's a family feel all around."

Before the game ends, he recommends that I try the homemade ice cream at Sweetwaters at Landalls and the green chile cheeseburger at Taco Box. Then he begs off to complete a personal mission. He heads to a corner of the arena's bleachers, near the athletes' exit. The victorious women's team makes its rounds, thanking each fan. The final words of praise they hear will come from him. NM

Former managing editor **Kate Nelson** *is featured in "Storytellers," page 8.*

Hide and seek.
LOS ALAMOS
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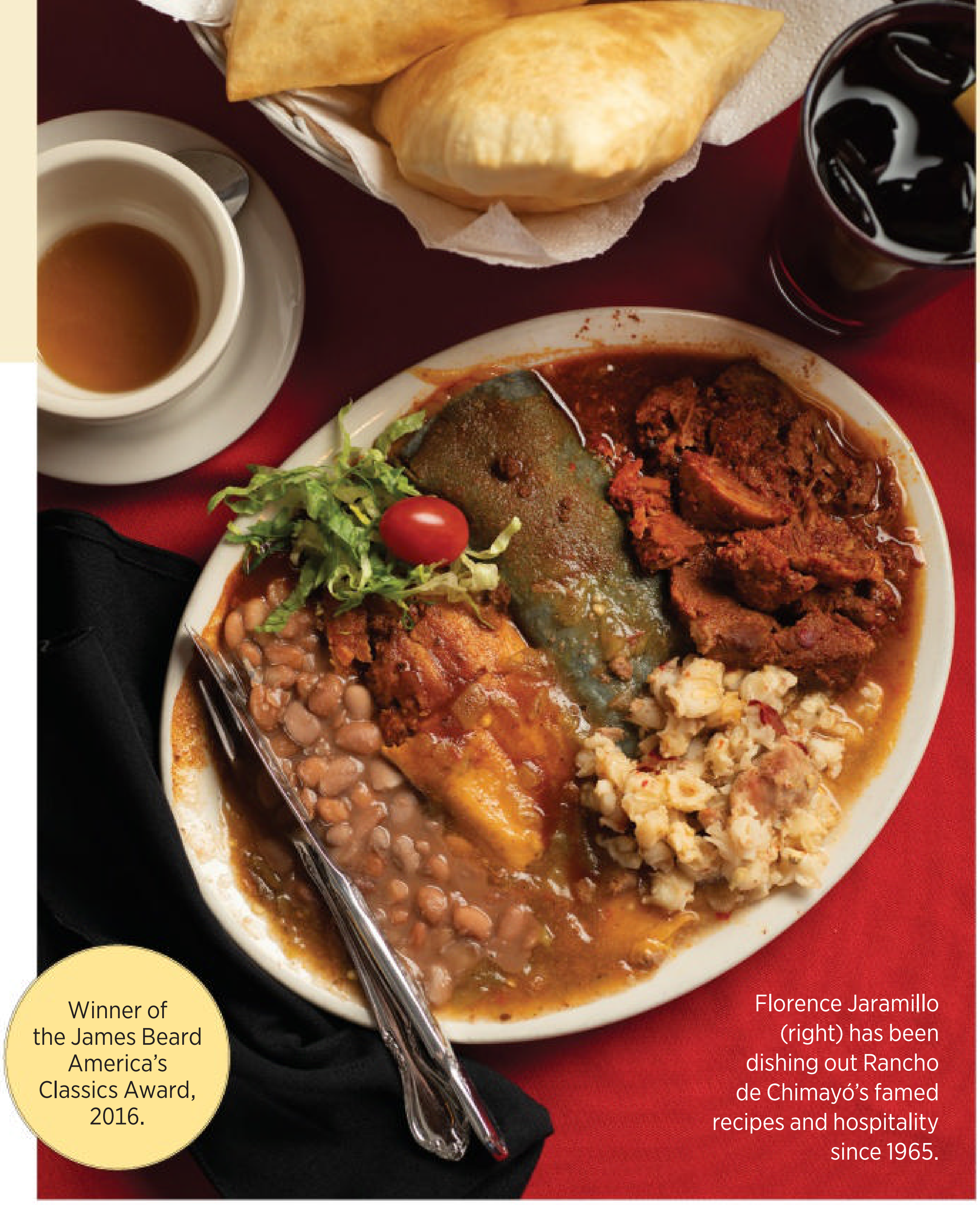
¡Viva la Cocina!

From roadside diners to downtown drive-ins, ancestral haciendas to mom-and-pop cafés, New Mexico's iconic restaurants tell tales. For generations, these hot spots have welcomed us like family, overflowed our plates with hospitality, and stirred our souls with cherished recipes cooked from the heart.

STORIES BY MOLLY BOYLE, LYNN CLINE, JULIAN DOSSETT, KAREN FISCHER, GREGORY R.C. HASMAN, AND JENNIFER C. OLSON

PHOTOGRAPH BY
Douglas Merriam

A Rio Pecos Burger and a carne adovada plate warm up a retro table at Joseph's Bar & Grill, in Santa Rosa.



Winner of the James Beard America's Classics Award, 2016.

Florence Jaramillo (right) has been dishing out Rancho de Chimayó's famed recipes and hospitality since 1965.

Dining at the legendary Rancho de Chimayó feels like coming home. Perhaps that's because this hacienda in historic Chimayó was the family residence of Arturo Jaramillo, who grew up here savoring traditional New Mexican cooking. In 1965, he and his wife, Florence—known to everyone as "Mrs. J"—opened their charming restaurant, serving many of those recipes, in this adobe.

Chile ristras hang outside as a familiar greeting. Family portraits and Chimayó weavings adorn the walls, while aromas of red and green chile perfume the dining rooms. All of it stacks the anticipation like tortillas on a platter for the first bite of the house specialty, carne adovada, made with pork marinated to tender perfection in earthy, sweet red chile famously grown not far from these doors.

"It's a hard business lately," says Mrs. J, who, at 92, knows what it takes to run a New Mexico classic. "But you can make a lot of people happy, and that's what's important. You treat them with kindness." Consistency counts, too. "People are happy when they come back and nothing's changed," she adds.

Whether it's a centuries-old hacienda, a café inspired by an old-school soda fountain, or a kitsch-covered diner, New Mexico's landmark restaurants share many of the same ingredients: family recipes inspired by Native and early Spanish traditions and made with time-honored techniques; kitchens and dining rooms staffed with grandmas, aunties, fathers, sons, daughters, and grandkids; longtime employees who might as well be related; a connection with community; and a passion for the work. "We cook with love," says Janice Baca Argabright, the third-generation owner of the Owl Bar & Café in San Antonio. "I consider my employees one big family, and they think of me as family also."

While the food is often simple, the flavors are complex—rooted in the land, layered by history, and seasoned with hospitality. What started with corn, beans, and squash grown by Pueblo people evolved into traditional New Mexican cuisine after the 16th-century arrival of the Spanish, who brought fruit, livestock, and other ingredients. Newcomers to the state have since stirred their own ingredients into the pot, resulting in a rich stew of flavors and influences. The chuck wagons and Dutch ovens, for instance, that kept cowboys and ranchers fed on biscuits and beans paved the way for ranch-hand steak houses, later followed by Route 66 diners along the "Mother Road," introducing touring Americans to our famed green chile cheeseburger.

But it hasn't always been an easy road. These classics have survived depressions, droughts, pandemics, and changing culinary tastes. "It takes hard work," says Olga Garcia, co-owner and chef of El Paragua, the Española restaurant opened by her parents in 1966. "It also takes a lot of blessings. Our parents had a great faith. We continue that today."

—*Lynn Cline*

KEY

REGION

CENTRAL	●
SOUTHEAST	●
NORTH CENTRAL	●
SOUTHWEST	●
NORTHEAST	●
NORTHWEST	●

AVERAGE ENTRÉE PRICE

<$10	$
$10–$15	$$
$16–$20	$$$
>$21	$$$$

Buckhorn Saloon and Opera House

PINOS ALTOS

“People ask why we don’t have an Open sign,” says Amy Wright, sous chef at the Buckhorn Saloon and Opera House, in Pinos Altos. Then again, neon doesn’t fit the aesthetic of the 1865 adobe in the historic mining village north of Silver City. Once one of eight bars in the boom town, the Buckhorn also functioned as a brothel until about 1970. The surest way to know whether the Buckhorn is open is to pop your head in. “From the outside, you’d not expect what’s inside,” says Katie Alecksen, bartender and manager. In winter, a whiff of the mountain air tinged with smoke from a wood-burning fireplace gives away its location. Many nights, another sign of life wafts through that entryway: live music from local acts and open-mic performers. “Once people find this place, they come back again and again,” she says. **Try this:** The green chile stew ($15). “You can’t go wrong with that,” says Wright. **buckhornsaloonandoperahouse.com** *—Jennifer C. Olson*

FOUNDED: 1865
REGION: ●
PRICE: $$$$

The green chile cheeseburger isn’t the only draw at the Original Owl Bar & Café—the ambience is just as good.

The Original Owl Bar & Café

SAN ANTONIO

Diners hungry for breakfast burritos, steaks, and a world-famous green chile cheeseburger have flocked to the Original Owl Bar & Café in tiny San Antonio for nearly 80 years. Founded as a mercantile, the Owl makes an all-beef claim to inventing New Mexico’s iconic burger. As owner Janice Baca Argabright tells it, her grandfather Frank Chavez opened a small bar inside the store in 1945, which drew hungry Manhattan Project scientists working at the nearby Trinity Site. Chavez added a grill behind the bar and served burgers with a side of picante. “One day, the dishwasher didn’t show up to work,” says Argabright. “So my grandfather said, ‘Goddarnit, there’s not enough dishes to serve the green chile as a side order, so I’m just going to put it on the burger.’ ” With its wood booths, red vinyl seats, and antique mahogany bar, the Owl holds tight to its tasty past. “I try to keep it the way it was,” Argabright says. **TRY THIS:** Duh! You’re here for the green chile cheeseburger ($6.50), made from hand-ground all-beef patties topped with melted cheese, lettuce, tomato, pickles, onions, and a “secret” green chile sauce. **sanantonioowl.com** *—LC*

Corona & Nacho's
WNMU
BUD LIGHT

FOUNDED: 1945
REGION: ●
PRICE: $$

El Bruno’s Restaurant y Cantina

CUBA

High school sweethearts Hazel and Bruno Herrera opened El Bruno’s Restaurant y Cantina in 1975 in the small town of Cuba, with recipes from Hazel and her grandmother. It wasn’t long before locals and travelers on US 550, between Albuquerque and Farmington, discovered this spot, known for carnitas with papitas, pollo con piñon, and carne adovada that’s slowly simmered for hours in bittersweet sun-dried red chile. Bruno oversees the grill for dishes such as carne asada and the aptly named Bruno’s Special, a hand-cut rib eye smothered with chile. “Bruno’s great on the grill,” says Hazel. Thirteen years ago, the family brought their acclaimed food and award-winning margaritas to Albuquerque, where daughter Melanie Dunn manages El Bruno’s in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque. Back in Cuba, daughter Wendel Cebada serves as executive chef. “I’ve always said that I cook from my heart,” says Hazel, “and so do my daughters.” During the pandemic, two granddaughters pitched in at El Bruno’s. The family connection counts for Hazel. “It gives me a good feeling,” she says. “Somebody from the family is always there.” **Try this:** The Combination Picante ($16.99), with an enchilada, tamale, taco, beans, and rice, lets you try a variety of El Bruno’s delicious fare. **elbrunonm.com** *—LC*

FOUNDED: 1975 **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $$

Our Lady of Hernandez

SOCORRO HERRERA OPERATES HER NAMESAKE RESTAURANT IN THE HOME WHERE SHE WAS BORN.

During the Great Depression, when she was born, Socorro Herrera's family ran a grocery and liquor store out of their late-19th-century home in Hernandez. By age 17, she was a young wife with a new baby. She learned to cook by necessity, priding herself on her ability to make a can of corned beef stretch three days with various recipes. After enjoying a career as a singer, she opened Socorro's Restaurant in 1997. The bustling roadside café has since fed the likes of former President Barack Obama and actor John Travolta. Named after Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Herrera is known for bringing meals to people in need. Last year, Northern New Mexico College awarded the great-grandmother of 10 an honorary degree for her contributions to the community.
—As told to Molly Boyle

I developed the recipes over the years. I didn't want to make Mexican food. Mexican food has a lot of spices—it's good, don't get me wrong! But Spanish people, we only use garlic, salt, and maybe a little bit of oregano. No cumin here. Just simple. Everybody tells me, "You cook just like my grandma."

I'll be 86 in July. Every birthday, I say I'm quitting, but then I keep going. I love the people here. I have boyfriends. I'll tell the wife, "This is my boyfriend." I have, like, four adopted sons who come here. They bring me flowers.

My band was Socorro y Los Sueños. I liked to sing boleros. We played at the Taos Inn every Sunday for 14 years. Those were the good old days, people dancing in the rain. I still sing here now, for people's birthdays.

I have pictures of everyone on the walls. [The late boxer] Johnny Tapia would come every year for his birthday. I made him chocolate cake. John Travolta came three times. He brought his son; he brought his wife. He was so nice. He wanted to taste everything, especially the chicos.

I tell everybody in the kitchen, "If you put a little love in that meat, it'll soften." I just sit here, and I eat a lot. Maybe that's why I'm so healthy.

CLASSIC WE LOVE

GREEN CHILE MILKSHAKE

What's better than a burger from a two-time winner of the New Mexico State Fair's Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge? How about a frothy, fiery green chile milkshake to go with it? This simple concoction of vanilla soft-serve ice cream and diced Hatch green chile from the world-famous **Sparky's Burgers, Barbecue & Espresso**, in Hatch, is worth a trip across the state, maybe even the country. "The sweet and spicy flavors hit all the notes on your taste buds simultaneously," says Teako Nunn, who co-owns Sparky's with his wife, Josie. Prefer chocolate? Try the Ozzy, the same green chile shake but with chocolate sauce. Nunn created it for heavy metal rocker Ozzy Osbourne, who came to town in 2018. "I brought it to his table, and before I walked by again, he had finished it," says Nunn. "We've been serving it ever since." **sparkysburgers.com** *—LC*

Illustrations by Chloe Zola

Tuck into the fiery chile at Horseman's Haven—if you dare.

Horseman's Haven
SANTA FE

"My face is burning off," the late Anthony Bourdain remarked in 2013, dripping sweat on TV. While filming an episode of *Parts Unknown* in Santa Fe, Bourdain made the decision—or perhaps the mistake—to sample the Level 3 green chile at Horseman's Haven, an old-school dive named for a long-since-shuttered racetrack and tucked beside the Giant gas station on Cerrillos Road. The original restaurant, opened in 1960, was situated in a truck stop; 21 years later, Louis and Rose Romero bought the place, kept the name, and introduced the masses to their top-secret strain of the hottest green chile around. "My dad had an old joke he'd tell us: 'If you're sick—or if you get stuck in the snow—you gotta eat your Level 2,'" says their daughter, owner Kim Gonzales. Sweating it out in a cozy wooden booth at Horseman's is a local rite of passage—and one of the best ways we know to bond over a meal. **TRY THIS:** Huevos rancheros ($12.95) are served smothered in chile atop a blue corn tortilla with a warm flour tortilla. **facebook.com/horsemans.haven** —*MB*

FOUNDED: 1960
REGION: ●
PRICE: $ $

La Posta de Mesilla
MESILLA

"There's lots of places to eat Mexican food, but few have the ambience and character La Posta de Mesilla has," says Thomas Hutchinson, who co-owns La Posta with his wife, Jerean. "It's a dining experience rather than just a meal." Walk into the 1840s adobe building and you might be greeted by the same pair of macaws and the toothless piranha that have welcomed others for decades. Jerean's great-aunt, Katy Griggs Camuñez, was the visionary who brought tropical birds and fish into the "little chile shop" she opened in 1939 that now accommodates up to 450 people. "Each dining room has a story of its own dating back to the 1800s," Thomas says. The restaurant is on the site of the former Corn Exchange Hotel—on the Mesilla Plaza, west of Las Cruces—which served stagecoach travelers along the Butterfield Trail. La Posta's menu centers around family recipes like Tostada Compuesta—a tortilla cup filled with beans and topped with green chile and chicken or red chile con carne. "These recipes, we stay true to," he says. "We were farm to table before farm to table was cool." **Try this:** The cucumber-jalapeño margarita ($10.95), made with New Mexico honey and rimmed with crushed local pecans. "We have one of the largest tequila selections in the Southwest," he says. **lapostademesilla.com** —*JO*

FOUNDED: 1939
REGION: ●
PRICE: $ $

Pioneer Steak House
LOVINGTON

The Pioneer Steak House sign—with its prominent longhorn, oil derrick, and pumpjack—might as well be a promise. You'll get a hearty meal here, and it's been that way since 1968. Step inside the Lovington mainstay and order a juicy rib eye seasoned with a spicy Southwest blend or dig into the buffet for plates filled with Cajun shrimp, barbecue brisket, or Tuesday's popular chicken livers and gizzards. "We make everything from scratch," says co-owner Terrie Blackwood, who bought the place with her husband, Johnny, in 1996. As salad bars and buffets have declined from the restaurant landscape, the Pioneer's has thrived, satisfying hungry locals, especially oil field workers and ranchers after a long day's work. As for what keeps them coming back, the answer is simple. "It's just the down-home cooking, I guess," Terrie says. **Try this:** Terrie's favorite is the perfectly cooked sirloin ($9.45 for six ounces and $10.75 for eight ounces) with a baked potato. **nmmag.us/pioneersteakhouse** —*Gregory R.C. Hasman*

FOUNDED: 1968 **REGION:** ●
PRICE: $ $

Clockwise: Western art watches over Frontier diners. Add a sweet roll to your order. Owners Larry and Dorothy Rainosek.

Frontier Restaurant

ALBUQUERQUE

On any day of the week at the Frontier Restaurant, you'll find college students devouring chile-topped burritos, families gathered for a celebration, and longtime friends sipping coffee, eating sweet rolls, and reminiscing as they look out the big picture windows on Central Avenue. "We've been known for great people-watching," says Dorothy Rainosek, who owns the Frontier with her husband, Larry. That includes cooks sporting classic paper hats in the open kitchen while whipping up fresh tortillas, cheeseburgers, and cups of green chile stew. "In New Mexico, we quickly learned you better have green chile," says Larry, a Texas transplant. The expanse of Frontier's five adjoining dining rooms is decked out with a range of unique Western artworks, including a wall piece of John Wayne made entirely from metal nails and colorful paintings of New Mexican life by Fred Cleveland. "You just come in, and you'll see somebody you know," Larry says. "It's a comfortable gathering place." **TRY THIS:** Based on the Texas-favorite Manske rolls, the Frontier sweet rolls ($2.75) are baked fresh daily. "It's still one of our signature items," Dorothy says. **frontierrestaurant.com** —*Julian Dossett*

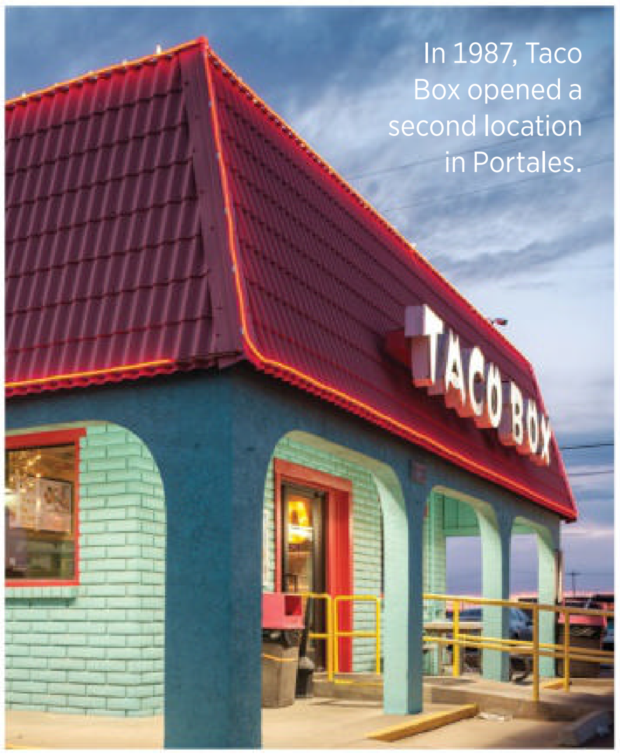
FOUNDED: **1971** **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $

Taco Box

CLOVIS

The bright red mansard roof towers over bold letters proclaiming "Taco Box" on the side of the building that's served Clovis as a quick burrito stopover and gathering place for generations. "We know people's names," says Thomas Martin, who runs Taco Box alongside his father, Tom. "We've got a community." El Paso, Texas-based Taco Box International owned about 15 franchises in Texas, California, and New Mexico in the late 1960s. "But one by one, they just closed," Tom says. Since 1971, the Taco Box in Clovis has been an independently owned family business. In 1987, they expanded to Portales. "We had six items on our original menu, and now there are 50," Tom says. The Taco Box recipe for success? Staying accessible and consistent. "When we celebrated our 50th anniversary, I looked up, took a moment, and said, 'Fifty years is a long time,'" Thomas says. "Then put my head back down and got back to work." **Try this:** Frijole Burrito ($6.79 meal). "We make our beans fresh every day, and we make our own spices," Tom says. **tacobox.com** —*JD*

FOUNDED: **1969** **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $



In 1987, Taco Box opened a second location in Portales.

Pappas' Sweet Shop

RATÓN

In 1923, Jim Pappas and his partner, Gus Petritsis, opened a candy and ice cream store in Ratón. A century later, Pappas' Sweet Shop remains in the family and continues to serve many of its original items. First located near the movie theater, Pappas' was a pre-film must, says Ann Marie Pappas Rigdon, Jim's granddaughter, who now owns and operates the restaurant. "Grandpa would often give the kids a free piece of candy." In 1973, after Jim's oldest son, Mike, had taken the reins, Pappas' relocated to south Ratón and became a fine dining spot. Today, Anne Marie's son, Matthew, cooks most of the authentic American and New Mexican fare. "I love hearing the stories about customers that have been eating with us for years," she says. "They feel like part of the family." **Try this:** The chicken salad sandwich. On the menu since the beginning, it is still made with the same bread recipe. **nmmag.us/pappas** —*LC*

FOUNDED: **1923**

REGION: ●

PRICE: $

TACO BOX: STEVEN ST. JOHN

Here to Serve

WANITA JONES WENT FROM WAITRESS TO OWNER OF EL CAMINO FAMILY RESTAURANT.

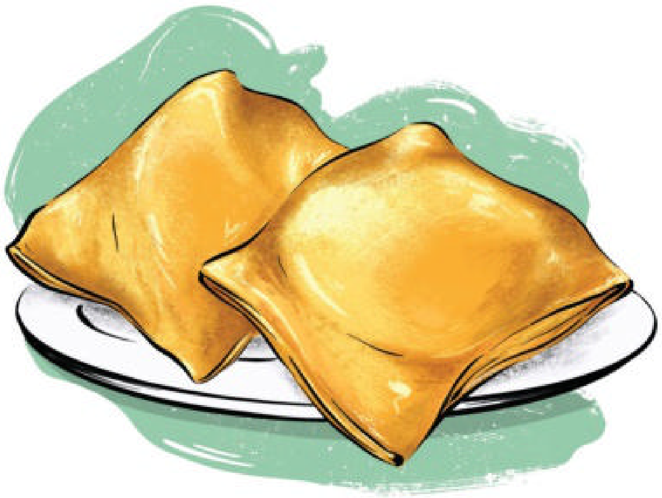
Wanita Jones started working as a waitress at El Camino Family Restaurant, in Socorro, in 1991. For more than two decades, she served up tasty Frito pie, triple-decker Monte Cristo sandwiches, and other throwback fare to locals, hungry travelers, and New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology students. When owner Mehrdad Moradi wanted to step back, Jones stepped up. "We changed hats, and I became the owner," she says. Little else has changed at the diner since it opened in 1963, including the original neon sign overlooking the city's main drag. —As told to LC

Every week we get people coming in. They say, "Look at this place," and take pictures. I think a lot of the interior is still the original stuff, like the chandeliers. People say our lounge is like stepping back in time. We try to leave it as it was because people in town ask us to.

It makes me feel wonderful to own the restaurant. We're here to please people. It's wonderful to get compliments. But the second I take something off the menu, people say, "What did you take that off for?" If we do one little thing different in our recipes, I hear about it.

Everything is homemade—our soups, our hamburgers. Our favorite item is our chile cheese fries. The New Mexico Tech students have to get those. People love our New Mexican fare—our rellenos, our carne adovada. We make our red and green chile fresh every day.

I did this to bring all three of my daughters into the restaurant. Right now, my daughter Pam is the day manager, and my youngest daughter, Jaden, is the night manager. When Covid-19 started, we talked about shutting down. But my daughters said we need to do all we can to make this restaurant work so we can bring our children into the business, work together, and build for our future.



CLASSIC WE LOVE

SOPAIPILLAS

El Patio de Albuquerque serves its sopaipillas with just about everything on the menu. Have one for breakfast stuffed with carne adovada, eggs, and papas, blanketed in red or green chile or Christmas-style, topped with melted cheddar cheese. Order a stuffed sopaipilla for lunch or dinner and get a sopaipilla on the side. "People love our sopaipillas," says owner Dave Sandoval. The secret sopaipilla recipe comes from Tom Baca, Sandoval's father-in-law, who was El Patio's cook for 35 years. Plus, El Patio uses sunflower oil rather than the traditional animal fat for frying. "They come out nice and fluffy," says Sandoval, who isn't shy about naming a favorite. "I like the stuffed sopaipilla with refried beans, onions, and red chile," he says. "We make some good chile." **elpatioabq.com** —*LC*

The Family Way

OLGA GARCIA LETS HER MOTHER'S RECIPES AND TECHNIQUES GUIDE HER COOKING AT EL PARAGUA.

Larry and Pete Atencio began selling their mother's tacos and tamales from a roadside stand in Española in 1958, launching an extraordinary culinary journey for the family of nine siblings and their parents, Frances and Luis. The colorful patio umbrella their father gave them to protect them from weather inspired the names and logos of El Paragua, the Española restaurant established in 1966 in the former tack room of the family home, and later, the more casual El Parasol. Opened in the 1980s as a taco stand next to El Paragua, El Parasol now has six locations in northern New Mexico, all operated by family members. While El Paragua temporarily closed during the pandemic, except for private events, the family has plans to eventually reopen. "My dad loved my mom's cooking," says El Paragua's co-owner and head chef, Olga Garcia, who began cooking in the restaurant with her mother at age 16. "He thought everyone should be able to enjoy this." —As told to LC

El Paragua started with the umbrella. You might say that was the original food truck. My brothers would sell to-go food, and we're still selling the same food—tacos, tamales. It's the same concept as in the 1950s.

All the recipes are our mother's recipes. We've kept those recipes, along with the same techniques and the same quality. Everything is homemade—every day, every component. The most important technique my mother taught me was taking your time, don't rush to make whatever you're making.

Our specialty is our tacos. Our signature dish is beef tacos with red salsa. Our mother won first place in the Southwest Chile Challenge for her beef tacos, and they're really different, because they're made with shredded beef.

El Paragua, it's our home, really. We brought our friends there. Everybody's friends grew up there. The employees' children grew up there. I love the closeness.

CLASSIC WE LOVE

GREEN CHILE STEW

Customers have been coming to **The Shed**, in Santa Fe, for extra-piquant chile since 1953. But, as general manager Frank Carroccino says, "The stew seems to hit people differently. It's served quite hot, too, so it's the whole package." The steaming bowl of fire-alarm-worthy chile, cubed pork, and creamy potato chunks, sided with hearty slices of garlic bread, is as flavorful as it is spicy. Despite the heat level, staffers report that customers rarely leave a drop uneaten. Chef Josh Carswell, whose family has owned the restaurant for generations, says the recipe came from original chef Connie Carrillo, and the stew evolved from an employee in the 1970s who thought it needed meat and potatoes. "People use it as a cure for everything," Carroccino reports. "Cold season, allergies, you name it." After you've sopped up every bit, try a slice of the frozen mocha cake for a cooling refreshment. **sfshed.com**

—MB

The ambience, care for quality, and Carne Adovada Turnover all make Mary & Tito's special.

Winner of the James Beard America's Classics Award, 2010.

Mary & Tito's

ALBUQUERQUE

Not much has changed since Tito and Mary Ann Gonzales opened their Albuquerque restaurant in 1963. Often considered the best place in the state for authentic New Mexican food, Mary & Tito's is celebrated for its red chile, carne adovada, and enchiladas. "My father said he learned how to cook from his mom," says the couple's daughter, Antoinette, who continues the restaurant's legacy. "He was the only one who cooked. My mom didn't go into the kitchen at all." Instead, Mary Ann ran the front of the house with grace and charm. "The ambience is still the same," Antoinette says. "We greet every single customer that comes in." One thing you wouldn't have found on that 1963 menu that you can get today? "After my dad passed away, my mom and I put chicken and sour cream on the menu," she says. "He didn't like chicken and he didn't believe in sour cream." **TRY THIS:** The Carne Adovada Turnover with green chile ($8.50) draws from Tito's love of Italian food. "It's like a stuffed sopaipilla but on steroids," Antoinette says. **maryandtitoscafeabq.com** —*LC*

FOUNDED: 1963 **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $

El Farolito

EL RITO

Velvety, piquant, sumptuous—these are the hallmark adjectives of El Farolito's signature green chile, a low-and-slow-cooked stew of pork, sweet tomato, and fiery flavor that won the top prize at the New Mexico State Fair for three years in a row during the late 1980s. The rustic 40-year-old diner, located at a crossroads in tiny downtown El Rito, was opened by Carmen and Dennis Trujillo; today, their kids, Dominic Trujillo and Christina Sanchez, follow the same recipes, bolstering El Rito's reputation as a destination for sublime New Mexican food. Chef Dominic says his father picked up some kitchen wisdom as a mess sergeant in the Army, stationed in Fort Polk, Louisiana; his maternal grandmother was from Jalisco, Mexico, and passed her skills down to Carmen. Glowing old reviews from *Gourmet* and *Roadfood* line the walls along with the place's namesake vintage kerosene lanterns, gifted to the family by customers over the years. "If you're going to come all this way," says Dominic, "I want you to have a good meal. I hear a lot, 'This is the best thing I've ever eaten.'" **Try this:** "Our Farolito Burger [$5.50, with chile, cheese, and bacon] is part of the local lexicon," Dominic says. **facebook.com/MarisolTrujilloPerry** —*MB*

FOUNDED: 1983
REGION: ●
PRICE: $

Bibo Bar & Grille

BIBO

Tucked inside an adobe facade off historic Route 66, Bibo Bar & Grille is no stranger to shifting with the times. The original building was a trading post in 1913 and went through a series of twists and turns. In the 1950s, the restaurant sold Spanish cuisine. But since 2007, Bibo has been an epicenter of green chile cheeseburgers and New Mexican biker legions. "Everyone comes for the green chile cheeseburgers," says Maria Kanesta, the bar and restaurant manager. The secret? Bibo uses the hottest Hatch chiles available, attracting bikers from across the state for weekly roundups from early March into the close of summer. The insider's scoop is to try the fried chicken sandwiches. A chicken breast is filleted by hand, breaded, and fried. To Kanesta, the love that goes into the sandwiches exemplifies Bibo's values: The entire dish is handmade, start to finish. **Try this:** To eat like a local, go straight for the hot wings. "They're fried crispy with Buffalo sauce," says Kanesta. "They speak for themselves." facebook.com/bibobar —*Karen Fischer*

FOUNDED: 2007 **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $

Patrons crave Pete's Shrimp Taco Plate right along with the Dinner Combination #2.

Pete's Cafe

BELÉN

In 1949, Pete and Eligia Torres opened Pete's Cafe, in Belén, across from the railroad town's former Harvey House. The one-room diner with two counters and cherry-red vinyl booths offered only breakfast, chile bowls, and burgers and fries. Over time, the couple added the traditional foods they had grown up eating: chile (using Eligia's mother's recipe), pinto beans, enchiladas. The authentic New Mexican fare helped make Pete's a community gathering spot, where workers spent lunch hours and families celebrated milestones. Although the restaurant has expanded and Eligia passed away in 2008, her granddaughters Camille Padilla and Marie Torres continue Pete's tradition using those same time-honored techniques and family recipes. "You would be surprised how many customers actually remember and talk about our grandmother," says Padilla. **Try this:** "Our customers always mention how much they love our chile rellenos ($11.50)," Torres says. Made with a bread-crumb batter instead of the traditional egg batter, they're a crispy delight with every bite. **petescafenewmexico.com** *—LC*

FOUNDED: 1949 **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $

Michael's Kitchen

TAOS

You never know who might wander into Michael's Kitchen in Taos. Regulars, tourists, movie stars, and moguls line up at this restaurant and bakery for the friendly service, fresh-baked treats, and plates piled high with breakfast enchiladas, German pancakes, and more. Michael Ninneman came across Spivey's Cafe in a 1940s building in Taos while on vacation with his wife. Smitten, they bought the place, moved their family from California, and opened the restaurant in 1974. Today, the Taos landmark is famous for home-cooked food, warm ambience, and devoted employees. "We've got generations that have worked for us," says Derek Apodaca, who took over the restaurant with his wife, Gina, Ninneman's stepdaughter, in 2005. Now, Ninneman stops by regularly for coffee and conversation. "It's the same place everyone's accustomed to." **Try this:** Any dish with chile. "It's northern New Mexico chile," he says. **michaelskitchen.com** *—LC*

FOUNDED: 1974

REGION: ●

PRICE: $$

Duran Central Pharmacy

ALBUQUERQUE

To reach one of Albuquerque's most iconic restaurants, customers must wind their way past shelves of vitamins, aspirin, and other remedies to a family-run diner centered around an old-fashioned lunch counter. In 1965, owner Pete Duran sold Duran Central Pharmacy to his staff pharmacist Robert Ghattas. The deal included the soda fountain: a source of sandwiches, fizzy drinks, and shakes. As the traditional fountain's popularity waned, Ghattas started experimenting with other offerings. "My father is a foodie and didn't want the soda fountain to die off," says Mona Ghattas, Robert's daughter and a pharmacist who now owns the business. "The New Mexican food became a big hit with all the clientele who came into the pharmacy." The home-cooked fare includes sublime carne adovada with a rich red chile sauce made from ground chile pods, not powder, and the down-home green chile stew, a restorative bowl of earthy, spicy goodness. Ten years after buying Duran's, Ghattas moved it to a larger location a few blocks away, in West Downtown Albuquerque. "I see generations of customers who've come here throughout the years," Mona says. **TRY THIS:** Duran's famous flour tortillas are made behind the lunch counter while you watch. "We've always made the tortillas to order, by hand," Mona says. **duransrx.com** *—LC*

FOUNDED: 1942 **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $$

HOME OF THE TIGER BURGERS
HI-D-HO
DRIVE-IN
Since 1952

Love Connection

MIKA MYERS, OWNER OF ALAMOGORDO'S HI-D-HO DRIVE-IN, UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE THERE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY.

Mika Myers grew up preparing burgers with her grandmother, Patricia Dulany, who owned Alamogordo's Hi-D-Ho Drive-In from the late 1970s until Myers took over as owner. Myers, who also works as a squadron test engineer at the nearby Holloman Air Force Base, has taken the lessons she learned about perseverance and compassion as a teenager behind the grill and applied them to her life beyond the drive-in. —As told to JD

My earliest memory being there with my grandma is smashing patties out for the crew to use for the day. She would tell me, "You have to get the thickness just right." She had been doing it for so long that she could just smash it out without that stainless steel metal ring.

I was 10 or 11, just coming to hang out with her. I would help her with little stuff or sit and watch the carhops. I started officially in high school when I took over the role of night manager—doing the schedule and cooking.

I learned from her to be caring. No matter the struggles that people went through, my grandma was always there to listen to them and not be judgmental about it.

My favorite thing is cooking—the speed at which you can get the orders out, making sure that you get it done right, and putting care into that food.

There are a lot of stories that people have about how Hi-D-Ho has affected them. They remember being here at a certain time in their life. We always get people that say, "It's still the same Hi-D-Ho."

It means a lot to me. I was raised doing Hi-D-Ho. My work ethic came from Hi-D-Ho. Even if I wasn't doing Hi-D-Ho, I could be doing anything in this life and still know that I worked hard because of the values and the lessons that I learned here. A lot of love comes out of Hi-D-Ho.

CLASSIC WE LOVE

GREEN CHILE CHEESEBURGER

Part of **Monte Carlo Steak House**'s allure is in its unassuming environs, just behind a family-owned liquor store off Central Avenue in Albuquerque. Patrons must go around the back to enter the attached windowless, retro-tastic restaurant where posters of Marilyn and Elvis line the wood paneling. "What do you want to know about the green chile cheeseburger?" says owner Louis Katsaros. "Is it the best? Yes. Does everyone love it? Yes." He inherited the place from his father, Michael, who opened it in 1970. The burger, made of an 80/20 blend of ground sirloin, sizzles on the old grill to the customer's chosen temp, then is topped with a melty slice of American and served with hot Bueno green chile, shredded lettuce, tomato, and onion. The alchemy lies somewhere between the perfectly toasted crunch of a buttered sesame-seed bun and the robust flavor of the patty. Among the neon-lit semidarkness and comfy booths crowded with families, this GCCB is right at home. **nmmag.us/montecarlo** *—MB*

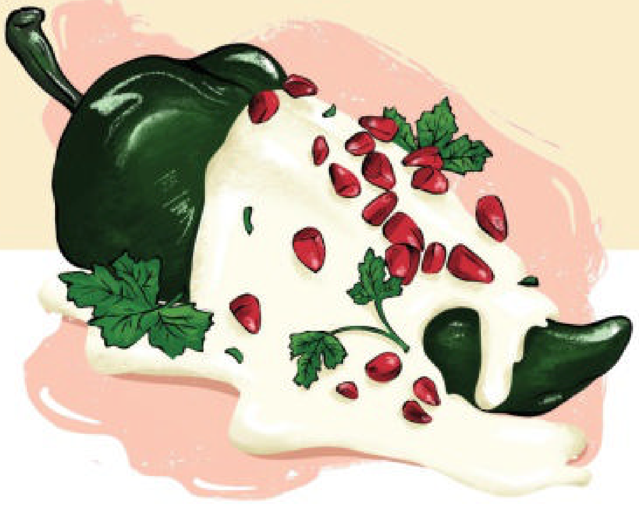
From pizza and burgers to carne adovada, Joseph's Bar & Grill pleases the whole family.

Joseph's Bar & Grill

SANTA ROSA

Joseph's Bar & Grill doesn't open until 4 p.m., but it's worth the wait for the Rio Pecos Burger smothered with green chile and cheese, the Blue Hole Margarita, or the red-chile-marinated carne adovada. "It's spicy," says general manager Sandie Martinez, "but it's really good and tender." Founded in 1956, when Jose and Carmen Campos opened a Route 66 drive-in called La Fiesta, it expanded a few years later to a full sit-down spot. After the couple passed down La Fiesta to their son Joseph in the 1980s, it was renamed Joseph's Bar & Grill and expanded to include a full-service bar, nightclub, and Route 66 gift shop. From specialty pizzas (try the Supremo Grande with Canadian bacon, bell pepper, pepperoni, sausage, olives, mushrooms, and onions) to New Mexican favorites such as stuffed sopaipillas, the menu serves up a little something for the whole family. "It's a homey place," says Martinez, who recommends finishing your meal with a slice of coconut cream pie. "People come in and enjoy themselves." **TRY THIS:** The calzone ($9.99) comes with stuffings ranging from pepperoni and sausage to green chile and jalapeño. **josephsbarandgrill.com** —*GH*

FOUNDED: 1956 **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $$



CLASSIC WE LOVE

CHILE EN NOGADA

Chiles rellenos—poblano or green chile peppers stuffed with cheese or meat, then often battered and fried—are pervasive on menus throughout the state. In Taos, **Antonio's the Taste of Mexico** serves up a truly special variant. After opening his place in 2002, chef Antonio Matus adapted the dish of chile en nogada—which originates from the birthplace of chiles rellenos, the Mexican city of Puebla—into an astonishing amalgam of sweet, creamy, and savory flavors. "It was the best thing I ever did," he says of his signature dish, which elicited a visit from Guy Fieri last fall for a segment of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives.* Matus stuffs a large poblano pepper with seasoned ground beef, apples, pears, raisins, tomatoes, and onions, then covers it in a pecan brandy cream sauce. Topped with pomegranate seeds (or dried cranberries in the off-season), cotija cheese, and sprigs of cilantro, it's unexpected and memorable. "It's hard to find that dish in Mexico today," he says, "because the grandmas who cook it are not there anymore. Nobody wants to spend the time to make it." Pilgrims who drive to Taos for the chile en nogada can have it six days a week. **nmmag.us/antonios** —*MB*

Rancho de Chimayó

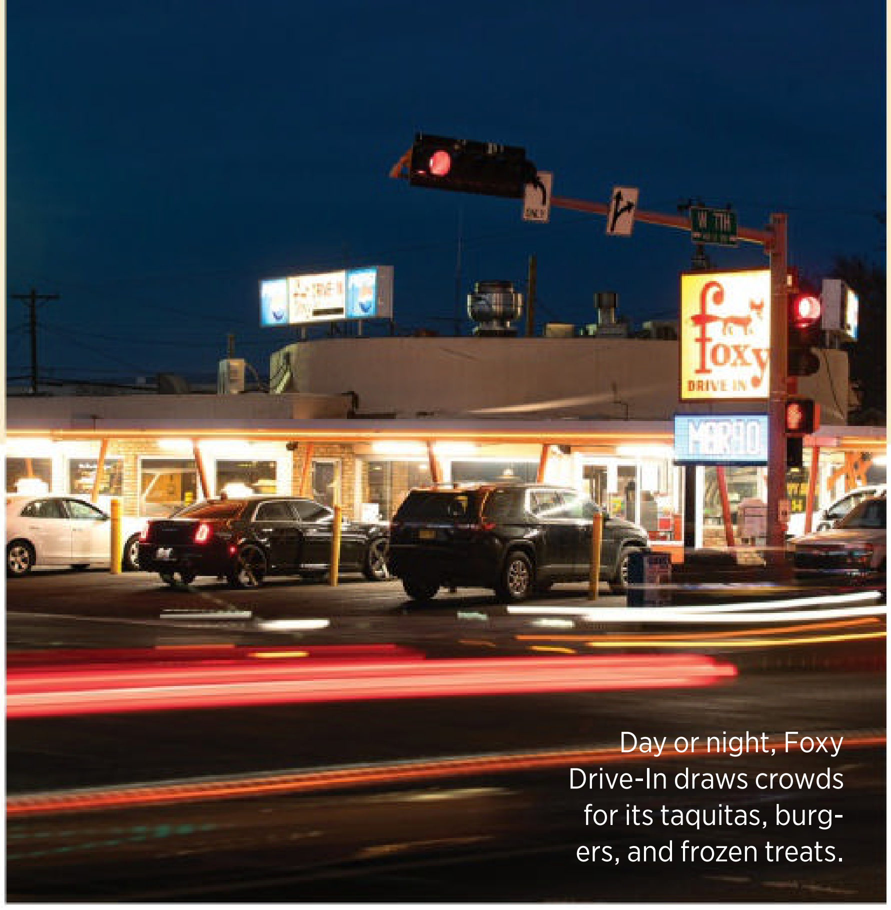
CHIMAYÓ

“We’ve never given up the quality,” says Florence Jaramillo of Rancho de Chimayó’s nearly six-decade reputation as the sweet spot for northern New Mexico cuisine. After the 92-year-old proprietor, known as “Mrs. J” to her customers, married Chimayó native Arturo Jaramillo, the couple opened a restaurant in his restored ancestral hacienda, a warren of bright rooms lined with art and family photos. Mrs. J cooked the family’s traditional dishes from recipes handed down over generations, and the crowds never stopped rolling in. It’s a place where time stands still. “I’m so happy when people come and tell me, ‘I was running around on the grass outside when I was two years old,’ ” she reflects. A tienda in the restaurant sells its salsa, red chile, and carne adovada sauce, along with a cookbook that’s an excellent entry-level introduction to the hallowed culinary secrets of Chimayó. **Try this:** A plate of chile rellenos ($17.95), with plump calabacitas and savory Spanish rice. **ranchodechimayo.com** *—MB*

FOUNDED: 1965

REGION: ●

PRICE: $$



Day or night, Foxy Drive-In draws crowds for its taquitas, burgers, and frozen treats.

Foxy Drive-In

CLOVIS

Park the car beside the silver-rimmed menu boards that line the 19 parking spots outside Foxy Drive-In and order the Ranchburger (“a basketful of good eating”), a peanut-butter-banana shake, or the famous taquitas. “It’s a place that people come, not only to enjoy a meal and the atmosphere, but to go back in time,” says owner Chris Bryant, whose father, A.C., founded the Clovis spot in the 1950s. Foxy bucks modern drive-through culture with a malt-shop vibe that invites you to pump the brakes on the go-go-go pace of life with a banana split enjoyed in the front seat of your Chevy, on the fountainside stools, or cozied up in a booth. “We have items for the whole family,” says Bryant of the menu that blends New Mexican dishes with drive-through classics and Southern fare like catfish and biscuits and gravy. “People have developed friendships and relationships here and gone on to get married and have families,” he says. **TRY THIS:** Taquitas (99 cents) are made by hand daily and served with in-house red sauce. “We’ve shipped them to Arkansas, Dallas—just all over the place,” Bryant says. **facebook.com/foxydriveinclovis** *—JD*

FOUNDED: 1956 **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $$

Earl’s Family Restaurant

GALLUP

The looming turquoise outline of Earl’s Restaurant on Route 66 has a mystical way of drawing in diners. Perhaps part of the enticement is the “Since 1947” label on the sign, which points to a slice of old-school Americana. But beyond that, one fact about Earl’s is known from every corner of the state: If you’re looking to buy jewelry or crafts directly from Native artists without any middleman in Gallup, Earl’s is the place to go. General manager Herman Livingston, who started out as a server 22 years ago, remembers dining at Earl’s in the 1960s as a child. Even then, artists went table to table selling jewelry, scarves, hats, and other wares. “It naturally happened,” notes Livingston. Over time, customers return to Earl’s not just for the Navajo tacos—puffy fry bread topped with pinto beans, ground beef, shredded cheddar cheese, lettuce, and tomatoes—but to stock up on gifts or splurge on purchases while dining. To Livingston, though, Earl’s has stood the test of time, thanks to its family environment. “I think we have four generations of employees who work here,” he says. “You don’t see owners at [other restaurants] working alongside their help.” **Try this:** Fried zucchini. The serving is so generous, you may not even need an entree. **nmmag.us/earls** *—KF*

FOUNDED: 1947 **REGION:** ●

PRICE: $$

Jerry's Cafe

GALLUP

Archie Baca grew up in Jerry's Cafe. His father, Archie Sr., purchased the West Coal Avenue restaurant from the place's namesake, Jerry Gonzalez, and Baca bought it from his dad in 1986. With recipes that have become a remix of the original Jerry, Baca's father, and his own curiosities, Jerry's food is beyond any one of them, and something all its own. The wood-paneled walls hint at the generations that have entered the café since 1976 for steaming plates of enchiladas and early-morning cups of coffee, along with the ones to come. The Gallup institution is famed for New Mexican classics such as chile rellenos, but the red chile—made with Hatch chiles and a recipe informed by Baca's mother, Hazel—is the undisputed star. "The red chile comes from that year, from that crop," says Baca. "That's the consistency you're going to get." In fact, a single employee is designated to make the red chile, which is best sampled when ladled generously over a massive stuffed sopaipilla. "I have a great staff," Baca says. "They're what makes Jerry's continue to be Jerry's." **Try this:** Jerry's Burger ($7.75). "It's been made the same since my dad," says Baca. "The only thing I did was go to a bigger patty." **nmmag.us/jerryscafe** —*KF*

FOUNDED: 1976 **REGION:** ●
PRICE: $$

Newer items such as the lamb burrito have become La Cocina favorites.

La Cocina

ESPAÑOLA

It all started when Phillip Maestas's Grandma Jessie, a former nanny to J. Robert Oppenheimer's children, opened a restaurant in the center of Española. Two generations and two locations later, Maestas and his co-owner, former Española Mayor Javier Sanchez, are proud to call the bustling La Cocina "singularly a northern New Mexican restaurant" that carries on the culinary legacy of Jessie Martinez. "When I hire people," Sanchez says, "I tell them about the number-one item people order, the Jessie's Combination plate, named after our founder. We have to make sure that's one of the best things we can provide to people because it ties us to our past and our traditions." Newer menu items such as the ground lamb burrito have risen in popularity, and Sanchez says the restaurant tries to source local ingredients, including lamb, cheese, milk, Bueno chile, and tortillas, as much as possible. "All of that stuff is made by New Mexicans in New Mexico." **Try this:** Jessie's Combination ($15) showcases a beef enchilada, cheese enchilada, pork tamale, beans, and posole, smothered in red and/or green chile and cheese. **lacocinanewmexico.com** —*MB*

FOUNDED: 1970
REGION: ●
PRICE: $$

Del's Restaurant

TUCUMCARI

To longtime server Renee Gutierrez, Del's Restaurant feels like the "little heart of Route 66." Founded in 1956 by Del Akin, it serves as a beacon—its blue-and-red neon sign topped with a Hereford bull calling out to hungry travelers. "Tucumcari is one of the biggest stops on Route 66," says Gutierrez, who has worked at the restaurant for more than 30 years. "To see repeat customers and people outside taking pictures of Del's is so warming." People line up outside just to sample the chicken-fried steak, fajitas, chilaquiles, and blackberry cobbler. "It takes longer to get a seat than it does your food," Gutierrez says. Since taking over as owner in 2021, Chase Waters, a Tucumcari native who started working at Del's as a teen, has added a few small touches, including a Saturday-morning breakfast bar. But the soul of Del's remains unchanged. "I'm the luckiest person in the world," Gutierrez says. "I get to eat there every day." **TRY THIS:** Gutierrez's favorite: beef chimichangas ($15.99). **facebook.com/delsrestaurant** —*GH*

FOUNDED: 1956 **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $$

The red chile at Charlie's Bakery & Cafe just begs for its famous fluffy tortillas.

Charlie's Bakery & Cafe

LAS VEGAS

If it's an election year in San Miguel County, you're likely to meet a politician at Charlie's. "They love this place," says owner Charlie Sandoval. "That's the only time I get to see the governor." He attributes "a lot of action" at the restaurant to its slogan as "the meeting, eating, greeting place of Las Vegas," where ranchers, tourists, New Mexico Highlands University students, and abuelos mingle and catch up while enjoying a large menu of New Mexican and American classics. There's a lot to see at Charlie's, from the enormous cream puff emerging from the café's storefront to the large-scale, fanciful paintings of burgers, pancakes, and sundaes done by Sandoval's son Isaac (owner of the Skillet, a restaurant nearby that caters to a younger crowd). At the center of the spectacle is the tortilla-making operation, which begins at 5 a.m. and produces 100 dozen a day. **TRY THIS:** "The secret to everything is the tortillas," says Sandoval, who based the thick, fluffy flour disks on his mother's recipe. Try a hot buttered one with whatever you order, then take a dozen ($6.99) home for later. **charliesbakeryandcafe.com** —*MB*

FOUNDED: 1950 **REGION:** ● **PRICE:** $ $

Tia Sophia's

SANTA FE

"My dad used to say that New Mexicans had been putting bacon, eggs, potatoes, and cheese in flour tortillas and eating them on the run forever. He was just the first one to call it a breakfast burrito and put it on the menu," says Nick Maryol of his café's claim to fame. The beloved institution located just off the Santa Fe Plaza has another boast, to boot: According to local lore, former server Martha Rotunno was the first to use the term "Christmas" to describe the frequent order of both red and green chile. Maryol's parents, Ann and Jim, opened the place nearly a half-century ago. He says the secret to the second generation of success is rooted in hard work and traditional recipes. "We roll out the dough by hand every day for our sopaipillas," he says. **Try this:** Maryol likes the simplicity of Sophia's Sandwich ($12), ham and melted cheddar served open face on a tortilla. **facebook.com/tiasophias** —*MB*

FOUNDED: 1975
REGION: ●
PRICE: $ $

Double Eagle

MESILLA

The Double Eagle restaurant drips with old-world charm—a 30-foot, hand-carved oak-and-walnut bar; Baccarat chandeliers; and pressed-tin ceilings accented in 18-karat gold. Every room of the former Mesilla hacienda is adorned with magnificent antiques, art, and furnishings. The sumptuous food fits the lavish setting—house-aged steaks, red chile escargot, lobster, and a margarita served the same way for more than 30 years. There's even a ghost story that dares diners to linger. The building dates to the town's establishment, circa 1850, and became a restaurant when oil magnate Robert O. Anderson opened the Double Eagle in 1973. C.W. "Buddy" Ritter, a fifth-generation Mesilla descendant and hotelier, bought and restored the Double Eagle in 1983. "The building just reeks of New Mexico history," says Ritter. **Try this:** Center-cut grande filet mignon ($46). "People rave over our filet mignon," he says. **doubleeagleonline.com** —*LC*

FOUNDED: 1973 **REGION:** ●
PRICE: $ $ $ $ NM

IN RELATION TO ALL THINGS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SHOUT

In the Gila Wilderness, the life and death of a raven tells a larger story of devotion.

BY JENNIFER DOUGLASS

Every day,

I drive the same highway into town. In a small community in the southwest corner of New Mexico, nestled in the foothills of the Gila Wilderness, my commute is a beautiful drive through a wild country with few people.

It takes me through the easternmost enclave of an incredible region called the Madrean Sky Island complex, or Madrean Archipelago, which includes my part of New Mexico as well as southeastern Arizona and northern Mexico. Here, 55 pine- and oak-studded mountain "islands" are encompassed within and separated by desert and grassland "seas," with some of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world. More than 7,000 species of plants and animals, including over half the birds in North America, can be found here.

I have spent enough time driving this highway to intimately distinguish trees and rocks, where animal territories begin and end, and which drainages run with the monsoon rain. I know how and when the snow falls on the mountain passes in the winter. Driving my daughters to and from school in this beautiful place, I have felt able to stop time during the journey, which has resulted in wonderful conversations over the years.

The route feels like an old friend: familiar.

But one Thursday last June, I spotted an unfamiliar sight: a raven in the middle of the highway lane. As I got closer, I could see that it had been hit by a car. Knowing ravens well from living alongside them for 20 years, I suspected it was one of the pair that lives in the dead oak tree on the ranch next to us. If I was correct, the bird was about three miles from its home.

Over the years, I have observed this family as it raised its young every season in the old oak. I know it's the same family because of the birds' habits when they visit my 40-acre farm. They know me as I know them. In the afternoons, the duo sits on the top bar that separates the horse stalls, preening and cooing, nuzzling each other. They know me and tolerate my presence as I have watched, in amazement, their care for each other. They are two big, black, beautiful birds, flashing iridescent purple and magenta in the sunshine, making a vast assortment of sounds.

I am lucky to witness this unconditional love.

The pair disappears during springtime. Only the male returns daily to collect chicken eggs, if he can find them before I get a chance. Like many animals living in our desert community, ravens mate for life. They reinforce their bonds through beautiful, almost playful courtship flights. Their bonds with their young are also lifelong and multigenerational. A paired couple creates beautiful family groups, with previous broods helping to raise the new fledglings. The adolescents often stay in these family groups for the five or so years it takes for them to become independent. Ravens have a long lifespan of 15 to 20 years spent in the wild, so an extended family can live together in the same location for a decade or longer.

They build a new nest atop the previous year's nest, using large sticks, twigs, cow dung, and any other building material they can scavenge. Over time, this pair's nest became huge, the outside diameter spanning three to four feet, and unmistakable if you wandered close. It is the only large nest around, carefully placed in the upper branches, high enough to protect the family from predators. There is a six-inch-deep central hollow nestled in the middle of the structure, and it's lined with Churro sheep wool, collected from the flock at the farm; shredded bark; and grass—perfect for the chicks.

By March, the pair lays four to six greenish blotched eggs. Incubation lasts about three weeks, the female patiently sitting as the male feeds her. By the middle of June, five to six weeks after the eggs hatch, the pair brings out the awkward fledglings for flight training. This is an exciting time for all involved. For several weeks, I enjoy watching them make runs, getting up in the air. I am surprised the horses and sheep tolerate their careening above the fields, tumbling and squawking loud adolescent cries. The parents are always patient and proud, making a multitude of tones with controlled pitch and timbre, creating vibrations that change in intensity.

Ravens have long memories and strong problem-solving skills, but like many other creatures in the Southwest, drought has affected them.

ALAMY/ SHIIKO ALEXANDER

Once the babies fledge, the parents return to their routine, coming over every morning to sit on the telephone pole at the barn. I've always felt that they wait for me to notice them. When I look up and say hello, they immediately go into a beautiful dance: a coo and a full-body dip. Then they click their beaks together for at least five minutes, with changes in frequency and additions of other unique sounds.

The ravens visit every day. Their presence has always touched my heart.

But as I stopped my car and examined the black shape in the middle of the highway, other vehicles whizzing by, my heart sank. Somehow, I knew who this was.

I had never seen a dead raven on the road before. They are known to be too smart to get hit by cars. When I picked it up, I could immediately feel its breastbone. The desperately hungry bird had taken a risk and gone for some morsel in the lane but was not fast enough to get away.

Recent research attests to the remarkable scope of intelligence ravens display. Biologists have found that by four months old, immature ravens have cognitive skills that rival adult great apes. They have brilliant memories and can solve difficult problems by working together and learning from their mistakes. Ravens can remember a human face for years, and whether that human was kind or aggressive, and will act accordingly. Researchers have found that ravens understand the science of water displacement—they're able to add pebbles to a container until they can get to the water. Even more remarkably, corvids (including ravens, crows, jays, and magpies) can make and use tools. Ravens have been seen using twigs and designing hooks to pry hard-to-reach food from crevices.

But these days, every creature in the West is in a desperate struggle to survive an incredible drought, the likes of which we've not seen in the Southwest in 1,200 years. Animals are risking their lives to find food and water. It was obvious that this bird miscalculated. In its desperation to retrieve the morsel, it spent an instant too long on the ground. I could feel where the car broke the bird's neck.

At first, I was just going to move the raven off the highway. But something

Maybe this was its way of telling me thank you for bringing its partner home. Maybe it was just lonely. It sat on the pole, conversing with me. And then it flew away.

in my heart told me to put it in a more dignified place. I brought it out to the field beside our house and placed it in the dried grass by a tree that we call Grandmother Juniper.

Grandmother Juniper is the ancient, gnarled alligator juniper tree that lives next to our house. More than a millennium old, she's one of the few junipers around, living with us in our expanse of grassland, a transition zone from savannah to forest in the high desert ecosystem.

When my daughters were first able to climb her, they named her Grandmother Juniper and spoke to her as if she were an old friend. The older they got, the higher they climbed. For them, her branches held the mystery of the world. I always knew where to find them when they were sad—high up in Grandmother Juniper, curled up next to her alligator-skin trunk. She kept their secrets safe.

After the dead raven had lain beside the tree in the grass for a few hours, I could hear another one outside. It was making a strange sound that I had never heard before or since. I stepped outside and saw a living raven talking to the other, nuzzling it and cooing. Tears came to my eyes as I watched this scene of mourning. Certainty set in: The dead bird was its mate and my friend.

The raven stayed with the carcass for the several hours before darkness, sitting in Grandmother Juniper and making the most melancholic, soft noises. The air was still and the evening calm, except for the laments of the raven. When night fell, all was silent.

The next morning, as I watered the horses and sheep, the raven flew up and sat on the telephone pole. I said hello. It talked back in a language I had not heard, a complex set of coos, clicks, and head bobs. The sounds were beautiful and quiet. My heart ached for its love of its lifelong mate.

Maybe this was its way of telling me thank you for bringing its partner home. Maybe it was just lonely. It sat on the pole, conversing with me. And then it flew away.

I am compelled to think about all the connections there are between the living things that surround us. If we allow them into our hearts, we can learn how to be human through their devotions and unconditional love. I know, in my quiet existence on the farm for more than two decades, these birds taught me what it means to love.

On that June day, I couldn't stop thinking about the lives that had already been lost in the massive wildfire that was, at the moment, directly threatening to burn our place along the Mimbres River at the edge of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. The Black Fire would become the second-largest wildfire in New Mexico history. In six weeks, it decimated the high country in one of the most pristine wildernesses in the lower 48 states.

Many horrible family dramas were taking place. Mammals, birds, insects, and plants, already trying to survive drought, stood in the fire's path, all frantic to outrun the massive blaze. My concern about material things, such as our house, felt insignificant compared to this horror. It is the struggle of all living things, trying to survive in the world that we have created.

But life is resilient, and out of this tragedy, there are lessons to learn. I wish that for one day, every human being on this planet could have the opportunity to see, experience, and listen with their heart to the beings that surround us, and to understand that we are insignificant compared with the immensity of all life.

Just one day would change the world.

Jennifer Douglass *is executive director of the Rio Milagro Foundation, which supports research, education, and conservation to mitigate climate change.*

ALAMY/ GLENN BARTLEY

Spirited Women

Think beyond the Cosmopolitans of yesteryear. In the world of distilled spirits, New Mexico women are making serious drinks with statewide reach.

By Natalie Bovis

Photographs by **DOUGLAS MERRIAM**

GREEN
SAUCE

Shake up Taco Tuesday with a Spicy Green Chile Margarita from 505 Spirits. **Facing page:** 505 Spirits founder Anna Jones (left) and head distiller Ashley Smith.

Caley Shoemaker crafts a luxe but comfortable vibe at Altar Spirits.

UNTIL THE 1960s, MANY STATES DID not permit a woman without a male escort to sit at a bar, never mind take her seriously as a spirits aficionado. Ironically, women are credited with fermenting grains into beer thousands of years ago, a woman in ancient Egypt is believed to have created the first alembic (pot) still, and the wife of an early Chinese emperor is said to have been the first person to create a distillate from rice.

The topic of women in the liquor industry is one near to my heart because back in 2006, I was one of the few women blogging about mixology. As interest grew, some misguided liquor companies sent me samples of cloying swill with cringeworthy marketing materials stating, "It's pink, women love it!" I felt the insult not only for myself but for all women who were dismissed as sweet-wine-sipping bubbleheads.

Since then, I've co-founded a liqueur, written five cocktail books, taught classes across the nation, and created NM Cocktails & Culture, our state's first mixology festival, in my hometown of Santa Fe. And I'm certainly not the only woman leading the masses to mixology. My inspiration has come from other courageous women forging new paths in the spirits business. In our state, we have many impressive libation-making ladies. Here are a few whose toast-worthy alcohol is making waves here and beyond.

Caley Shoemaker, Altar Spirits

545 Camino de la Familia, Santa Fe
505-916-8596, ALTARSPIRITS.COM

"I LOVE PROBLEM-SOLVING, WORKING WITH interesting and unique materials, and feeling like the work I do is connected to the greater community," says Caley Shoemaker, who co-founded Altar Spirits with her husband, Jeff Gust. "Making spirits offers all of this, and it has become a career that I find truly fulfilling." The acclaimed industry leader got her first glimpse of whiskey making during a 2009 tour of Stranahan's Colorado Whiskey distillery, in Denver, one of the few craft spirit makers in the nation at the time. That fateful day ignited her passion, and she took a job there while finishing her art degree. In 2015, Shoemaker became head distiller at Hangar 1 Distillery, in California, making her one of a handful of women to break into that role. Always eager to share knowledge, Shoemaker taught distillation techniques at the University of California at Berkeley, and via the American Distilling Institute.

Still, she longed to return to the Rockies. So when she and her husband, a brewer himself, visited Santa Fe for an anniversary trip, they realized it was the perfect launchpad for their own business. "I love how art is woven through this city," Shoemaker says. "The beauty of the landscape, architecture, and culinary scene is unmatched."

In 2022, they opened Altar Spirits, in the popular Railyard District. At the heart of the space is an impressive pot still they've named Lillith, which can be admired through big glass windows in the tasting room's bar. Pot stills are typically used for distilling brandies and whiskey. A pair of column stills next to Lillith is used for vodka production.

The real magic, though, is in the countless little jars stacked on shelves in a locked room. "I love to learn about medicinal, practical, and ritual uses of different plants, then experiment with them in spirits," Shoemaker says.

She celebrates New Mexico's biodiversity in her products and takes inspiration from chefs, perfumers, and herbalists. Her Sigil gin features 14 botanicals, leaning heavily on piñon, juniper, and sage. Her goal was to create a gin "that tastes like the smell of hiking here in New Mexico." And, because New Mexico allows for direct-to-consumer sales, she can experiment with one-off offerings only available through the on-site bottle shop, a treat for tourists and locals stopping by.

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Dave Crosley and Teresa Dahl-Bredine opened Little Toad Creek Brewery & Distillery in 2012.

GABRIELLA MARKS

Anna Jones, 505 Spirits

105 Harvard Dr. SE, Albuquerque
505-407-2347, 505SPIRITS.COM

PLAYFUL NAMES SUCH AS PURPLE PEOPLE EATER and El Bombón, along with whimsical labels, immediately alert imbibers that they are taking a deep dive into fun at the 505 Spirits tasting room, in Albuquerque.

Owner Anna Jones's 25 years in the food industry gave her a strong understanding of scaling recipes, packaging, and maintaining consistency. Head distiller Ashley Smith, who also has a culinary background, runs the copper pot stills and oversees production.

The distillery itself is nestled into the foothills of Placitas, where each of the women lives, overlooking sweeping vistas where wild horses roam. Their products are made in small batches without additives, preservatives, or artificial colorants.

The biggest challenge, initially, was sourcing the best local ingredients. Eventually, they teamed up with farms that helped them gain the New Mexico True certification for their red and green chile liqueurs. "I can tell when people are tasting red or green because they are smelling, smiling, and shaking their heads in disbelief," Jones says. "It literally is freshly roasted or sun-dried local chiles, plus some spices and herbs, and a touch of organic cane sugar."

The women pick their own prickly pear fruit at A&J Family Farms, in Lemitar, for the Purple People Eater liqueur. "Ashley and I picked 876 pounds in four hours," Jones says. "I do it two-handed with two pairs of tongs," Smith adds. "Tongs are a must." The labor of prickly love is worth it because Purple People Eater remains their top-selling product. Mixed with sparkling wine, it's festive for toasting all year round.

Teresa Dahl-Bredine, Little Toad Creek Brewery & Distillery

200 N. Bullard St., Silver City
575-956-6144, LITTLETOADCREEK.COM

TAKE A SIP OF PENDEJO PORTER, POP OPEN A Watermelon Jalapeño Mixed-Up Mule, or indulge in a Biscochito Martini and taste the New Mexican influence throughout Little Toad Creek's offerings. Teresa Dahl-Bredine's family moved to Silver City when she was just three years old, and the landscape and culture seeped into her psyche. She met her husband there when they were in fifth grade, and they are passionate about being part of the community.

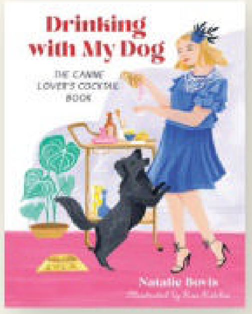
In 2011, when craft distiller's licenses became available in New Mexico, Little Toad Creek was the third in the state to win approval. Dahl-Bredine was also ahead of the canned cocktail craze when she created the Mixed-Up Mule open-and-serve cans in 2019, which now represent 80 percent of the company's distribution. "It was an exciting new product segment with unlimited boundaries as far as flavor and formulation," she says. "We had fun choosing combinations that would appeal to a variety of taste buds."

As spirit lovers know, tequila can only be made from the Weber blue agave plant in Mexico. Little Toad Creek, however, was developing agave spirits this side of the border before most other distilleries in New Mexico. "Our Five Ducks agave spirits were inspired by closeness to the Mexican culture and our love of tequila," Dahl-Bredine says. "Our Café Nocturno is a coffee liqueur with the Mexican influence of chocolate and cinnamon."

For the last decade, Dahl-Bredine has taken an active role in developing our state's spirits community. Her taprooms in Silver City and Las Cruces even showcase fellow brewers' beer and cider. In addition to running production at the brewery, distillery, and pubs, her team also handles distribution of their beers, spirits, and cans. NM

Natalie Bovis *hosts New Mexico Cocktail Week with* Edible New Mexico, *June 2–10.*

Natalie Bovis's latest book, *Drinking with My Dog* (Running Press), has tips on everything you need to set up your home bar. Plus, you'll find recipes for more than 60 delicious cocktails organized into dog-themed chapters, including rescue dogs, famous fur babies, and wild dogs, as well as libations for pawlidays throughout the year. Enjoy canine history, whimsical illustrations, and toast-worthy quotes. Find it at your local bookstore or at **nmmag.us/runningpress**.



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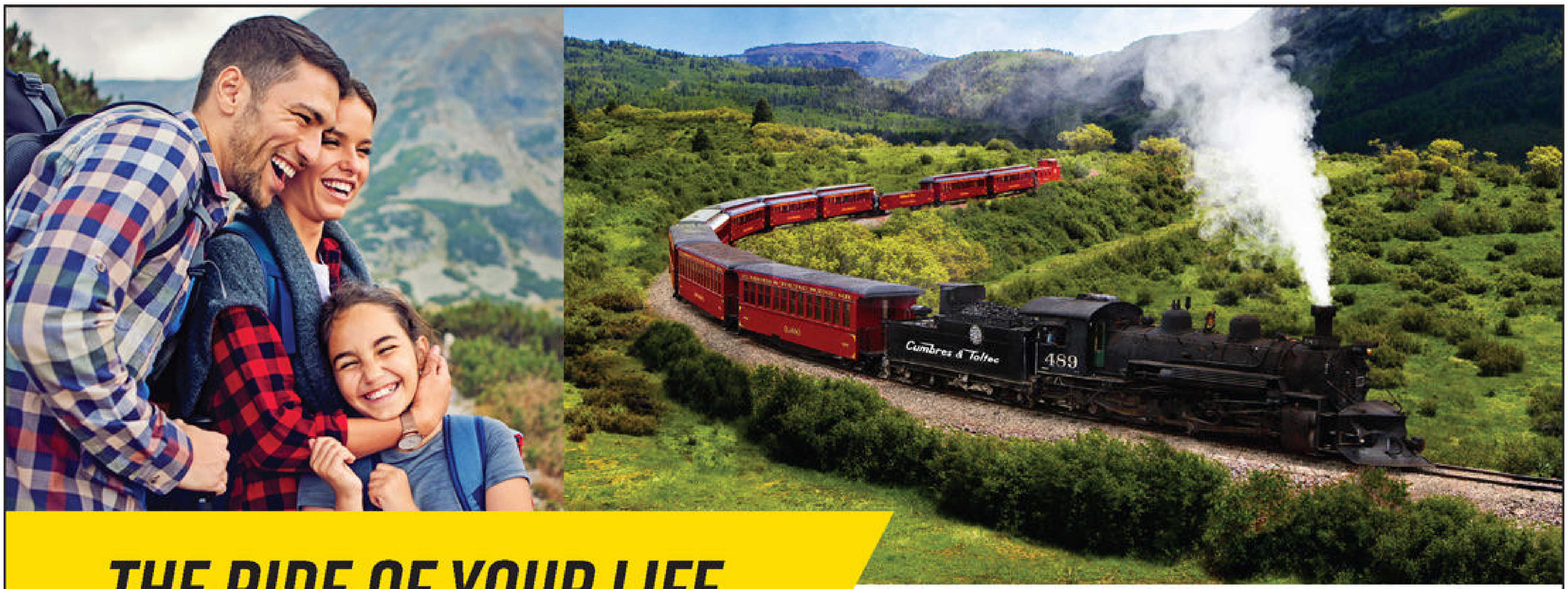
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Our drink of choice? A New Mexico Negroni. **Below:** Warm up with Little Toad Creek's Mexican Chocolate Martini.

NEW MEXICO NEGRONI

This drink showcases two remarkable products made at Altar Spirits: a world-class gin and an aperitivo that rivals established brands from Europe.

Serves 1

1 ounce Altar Spirits Sigil gin
1 ounce Altar Spirits Aradia aperitivo
1 ounce Vara Vermut Dulce sweet vermouth
Ice

Stir all ingredients with ice. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass.

505 SPIRITS SPICY GREEN CHILE MARGARITA

When head distiller Ashley Smith says that she makes this Spicy Green Chile Margarita with friends for Taco Tuesdays at home, you know it will be a winner in your home-bar repertoire.

Serves 1

2 ounces 505 Spirits Burquila joven agave spirit
1 ounce 505 Spirits Green Sauce green chile liqueur
1 ounce fresh lime juice
½ ounce Green Chile Lime Syrup (see below)
Ice
Garnish: salt, Jillipepper Hot Fiesta Pepper,* and a lime wedge

1. Mix equal amounts of kosher salt and Jillipepper Hot Fiesta Pepper mix on a small plate. Moisten the rim of a glass with lime, dip it in the spicy mixture, and set aside.
2. Combine remaining ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake and strain into the glass, pour over fresh ice in the glass if you are enjoying it on the rocks, and add the lime wedge.

GREEN CHILE LIME SYRUP

1 cup sugar
1 cup water
3 or 4 roasted green chiles
Lime zest, to taste

1. Boil sugar and water until sugar dissolves. Add roasted green chiles and lime zest.
2. Remove from heat, chill, and strain before use.

**Order New Mexico–made Jillipepper products at jillipepper.com.*

MEXICAN CHOCOLATE MARTINI

This decadent drink from Little Toad Creek is a tippling treat any time of day, but is especially delightful after dinner, while sitting in front of a roaring fire or under the big New Mexico sky.

Serves 1

1½ ounces Five Ducks Silver Agave spirit
¾ ounce Little Toad Creek Café Nocturno spiced coffee liqueur
1½ ounces chocolate syrup
3 drops mole bitters (optional)
1½ ounces half-and-half
Ice
Garnish: a pinch each of ground cinnamon, cocoa powder, and red chile powder, plus a mint sprig

1. Mix cinnamon, cocoa powder, and red chile powder together on a small plate. Moisten the rim of a martini glass with lime or water, dip it in the spicy mixture, and set aside.
2. Place remaining ingredients in a shaker with ice. Shake vigorously. Strain into rimmed martini glass.
3. Sprinkle with spice mix and add mint.

A one-hour workshop at Prairie Dog Glass costs $225. Each class can accommodate four students. 2820 Cerrillos Road, Santa Fe; 505-216-1699, **prairiedogglass.com**

PANTRY

Raise a Glass

Serve your best cocktails in a tumbler made by hand. (And breath.)

Once you've stocked your home bar with intriguing local spirits, you'll need some impressive cocktail vessels. Get crafty and make your own at Prairie Dog Glass, just inside Jackalope in Santa Fe. Owner Patrick Morrissey founded Prairie Dog Glass 18 years ago, along with a glassblowing program for his students at the Institute of American Indian Arts and Santa Fe Community College. Drop by and you can interact with various glass artists who rent space or teach at Prairie Dog Glass. Even better: Take a hands-on, one-hour supervised glassblowing workshop to create your own stemless wine glass or tall Collins glass. (Morrissey says that since stems and handles break off too easily, he recommends focusing on something that will last for years.) "When you're blowing a piece of glass with your friends, it's a creative diary," he explains. "You're creating a memory." Reservations are encouraged. Students as young as five can participate. —*NB*

Photograph by **DOUGLAS MERRIAM**

Art

Museums

Photographs by **JEN JUDGE**

Standing at the Crossroads

A former museum guard reflects on his journey through New Mexico art history.

By Michael Abatemarco

ONE WINTER DAY IN SANTA FE, I WALKED along Rodeo Road, camera in hand, seeking inspiration. I was also on the verge of tears. I was depressed—haunted by a future that seemed to be slipping from my grasp.

Last fall, after quitting my job at *Pasatiempo*, the weekly magazine of the *Santa Fe New Mexican* where I'd covered art and culture full-time for a decade, I was determined to find myself. I wanted to explore creative impulses of my own. But on this day—out of money, coffee, and groceries—I still wasn't ready to return to work. I was at a crossroads, and the right direction remained elusive.

That had always been my problem, I reflected. There was a calling out there with my name on it, always at the edge of my seeing but ever indistinct. As a kid, I wanted to be a dog, then Indiana Jones, then a filmmaker. I made a go at painting in the late 1980s and early '90s, but I dropped out of Massachusetts College of Art and Design in my second semester. I tried acting, completing a year at New York's American Academy of Dramatic Arts, where you had to be invited to attend the second-year program. I wasn't putting in the effort, so I didn't expect a callback. I didn't get one.

The author assumes his old museum guard stance at the New Mexico Museum of Art, in Santa Fe. Behind him is Robert Henri's 1916 *Portrait of Dieguito Roybal, San Ildefonso Pueblo.*

AFTER MOVING TO SANTA FE, I TOOK A STATE JOB in museum security, which had morphed into a quasi career. Having spent 14 years at three museums in two states, that's how I felt about it. It was a mostly entry-level position that required few skills—the bottom rung of the museum ladder, though every ladder needs one. As security sergeant at the New Mexico Museum of Art, in Santa Fe, I took pride in the fact that I was contributing, in some small way, to the preservation of an artistic patrimony while learning—every single day—about art.

The museum's tour guides and curators put the art in its historical context, which planted a seed I wanted to grow. After a short time absorbing the museum's collection, I saw New Mexico as a crossroads. For a fledgling art enthusiast, it seemed like the center of the universe, but I felt its significance to the art world at large remained underappreciated. As I spent my days watching visitors come, marvel, and go, that seemed to be changing. I could help foster the change.

That meant understanding and appreciating the flow of creativity that comes out of the region's storied and often disturbing past. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680, for instance, lives today in the works of Jason Garcia (Santa Clara), Virgil Ortiz (Cochiti), Bryon Archuleta (Ohkay Owingeh/Santa Clara), and other artists of the Indigenous Futurisms movement. When I began working in New Mexico, I knew nothing about the Pueblo Revolt. Artists, not history books, opened my eyes.

Museum guarding gave me time to see.

On a quiet day of guarding, you can only read the text panels so many times and run through the same musical track list in your mind without going batty. But looking at the art itself presents a window onto endless interpretations and perspectives. Even at its most unambiguous, a picture on the wall can bring mystery and magic into the viewer's world.

At the New Mexico Museum of Art, Michael Abatemarco stands beside Bill Barrett's 1992 bronze sculpture *Lago di Garda*.

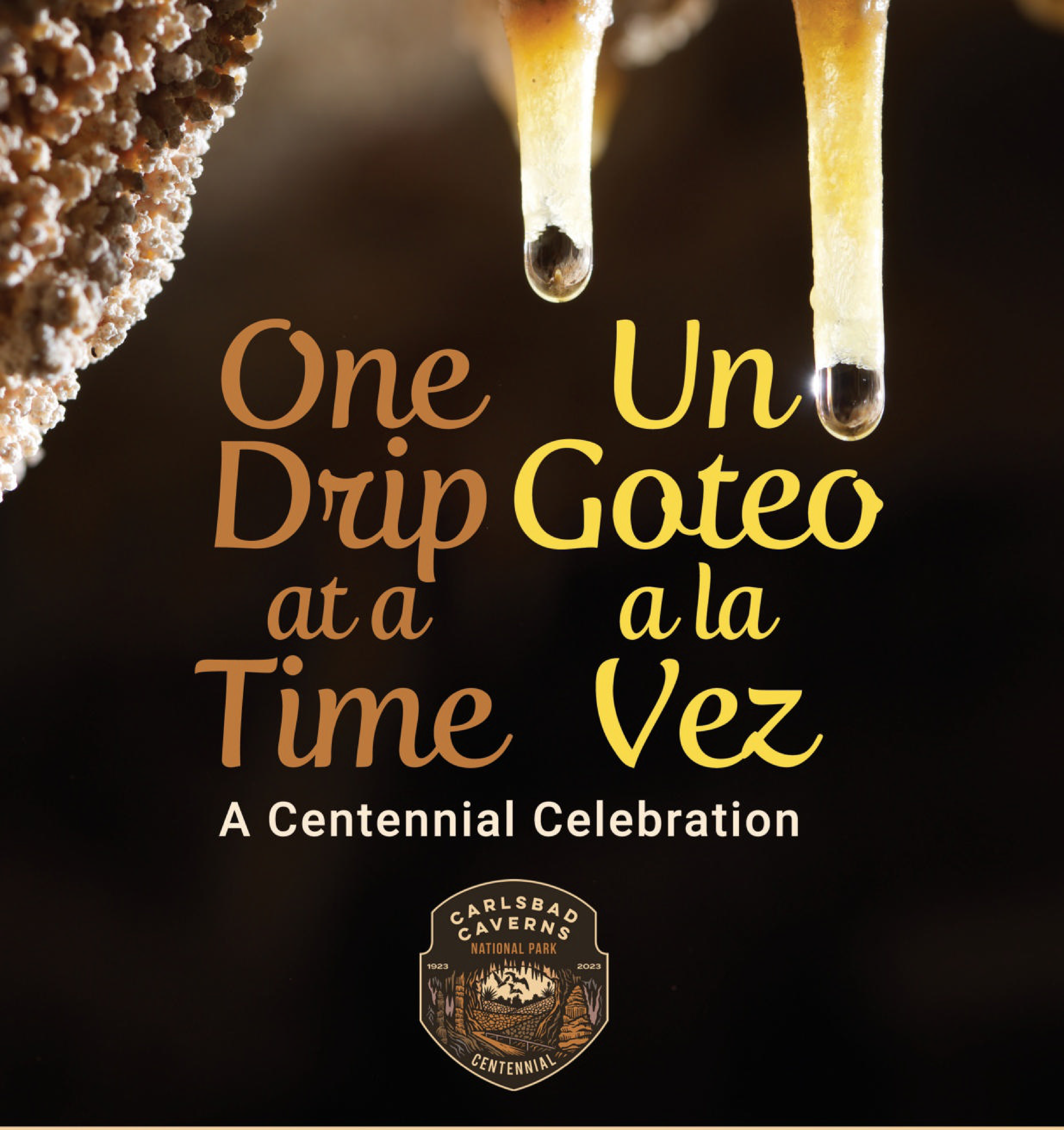
At the New Mexico Museum of Art, I fixated on Gerald Cassidy's painting *Cui Bono?* (circa 1911), which depicts a Taos Pueblo man on the eve of New Mexico's admittance into the Union. The portrait prompts the viewer to consider what good is gained through the appropriation of Indigenous lands. The title is Latin for "Who benefits?"

Cassidy (1869–1934) was a founding member of the Santa Fe Art Colony in the early 20th century. *Cui Bono?* depicts a life-size Taos Pueblo man, dressed in gleaming white. His weathered face stands out in contrast to his dress, along with the sand-hued pueblo and pale-blue mountains in the background. Cassidy avoided romanticized depictions of Indigenous lifeways. The figure's piercing gaze is a challenge to the viewer. His eyes don't leave you, regardless of where you stand in relation to the painting. He looks straight into your soul, passing an unspoken, unknown judgment.

I saw New Mexico as a crossroads. For a fledgling art enthusiast, it seemed like the center of the universe.

A guard in a room with *Cui Bono?* is never alone.

I used the masterworks surrounding me to make connections between my studies. (I earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of New Mexico in 2010.) The history of New Mexico's Indigenous artists, its colonial past, and its thriving contemporary moment swirled into a blaze that sustained my interest and kindled new passions. Every nod to the past I read into a contemporary piece of art was an affirmation that the past was also prelude—a key bit of information for any casual viewer of New Mexico art.



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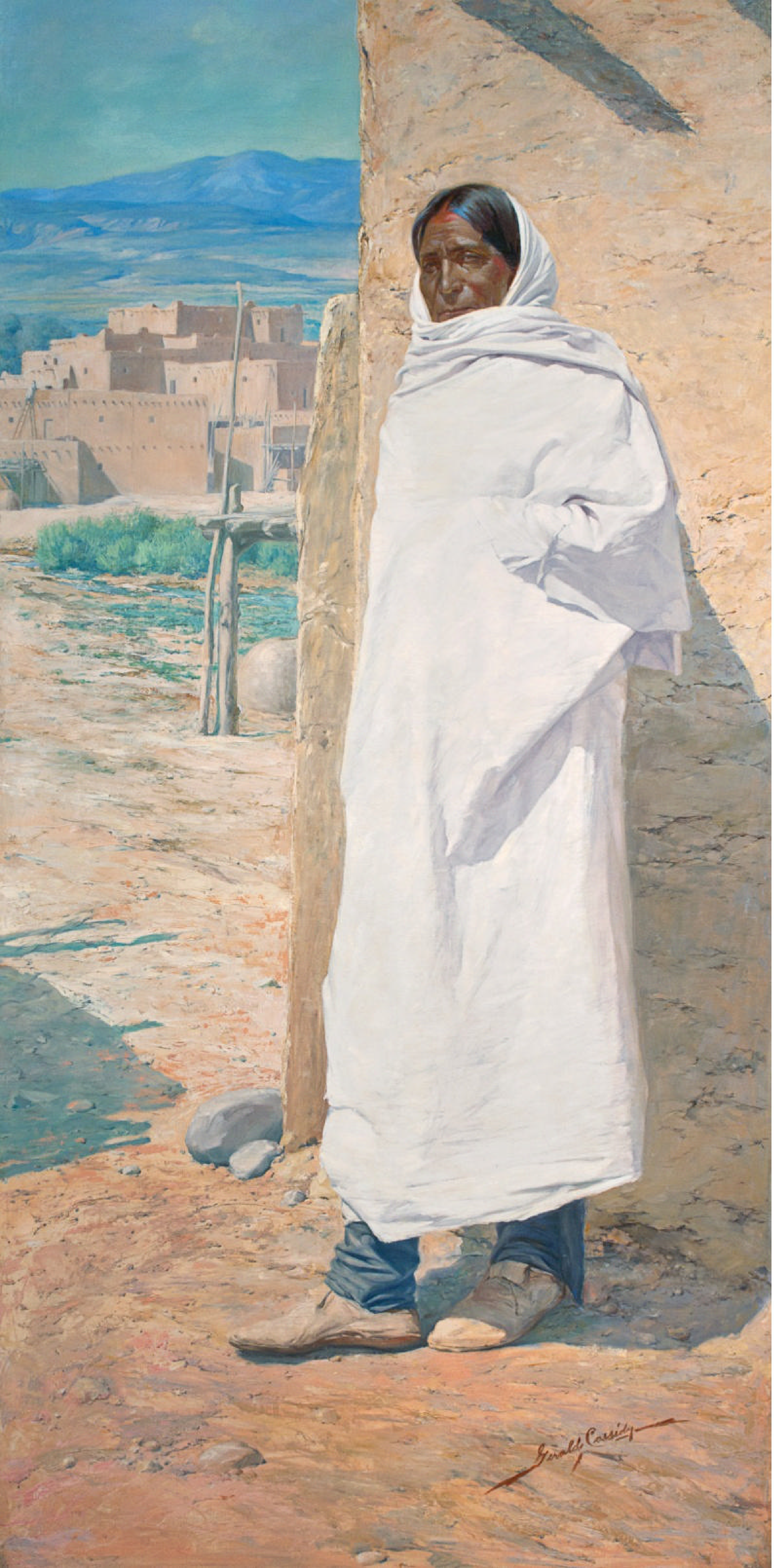

One such connection between the ages seems explicit in the work of Albuquerque-based photographer Joel-Peter Witkin. I saw it in his homage to Diego Velázquez's 1656 masterpiece of the Spanish Baroque, *Las Meninas.* Witkin restaged the composition using live models for his 1987 version, which is also in the collection of the New Mexico Museum of Art.

Velázquez depicted himself in the work in his role as court painter, creating the portrait of King Philip IV and Queen Mariana of Spain, whose reflections can be seen in a mirror on a back wall in the composition. That would place them in the same position as the viewer, giving one pause to consider whether Velázquez assumed anyone standing before his masterwork was royal or noble, too.

Witkin's photograph retains this feature of the original, since the portrait is a reflection. Witkin also follows a long tradition in creating studio photographs using lifeless objects that recall the Italian Renaissance genre of *natura morta* and still-life painting. The inclusion in Witkin's works of *memento mori* (reminders of death) is a recognition that life is ephemeral. Often enough, it's the beauty of a Witkin image that grabs us before the grotesque reality of what we're looking at—severed genitals, a disembodied head—sets in. By then, it's too late to look away. He's already shown us another side of humanity.

"I don't photograph nice things, timid things," Witkin once told me. "I photograph things that are challenging and promote thought and individual reckoning." But he shows these things in a "nice" way—meaning in an artistic way. This seminal New Mexico artist invites the viewer to reflect on mortality using the classical lexicon of art history. His work sets up a confrontation between past and present, life and death.

When a former curator at the museum presented an exhibition of New Mexico modernists that struck me as Eurocentric, and downplayed the significance of the region's

Part of the New Mexico Museum of Art's collection, Gerald Cassidy's *Cui Bono?* challenges the viewer with its unrelenting gaze.

GERALD CASSIDY, *CUI BONO?*, CIRCA 1911, OIL ON CANVAS. COLLECTION OF THE NEW MEXICO MUSEUM OF ART. GIFT OF GERALD CASSIDY, 1915 (282.23P), PHOTO BY BLAIR CLARK.

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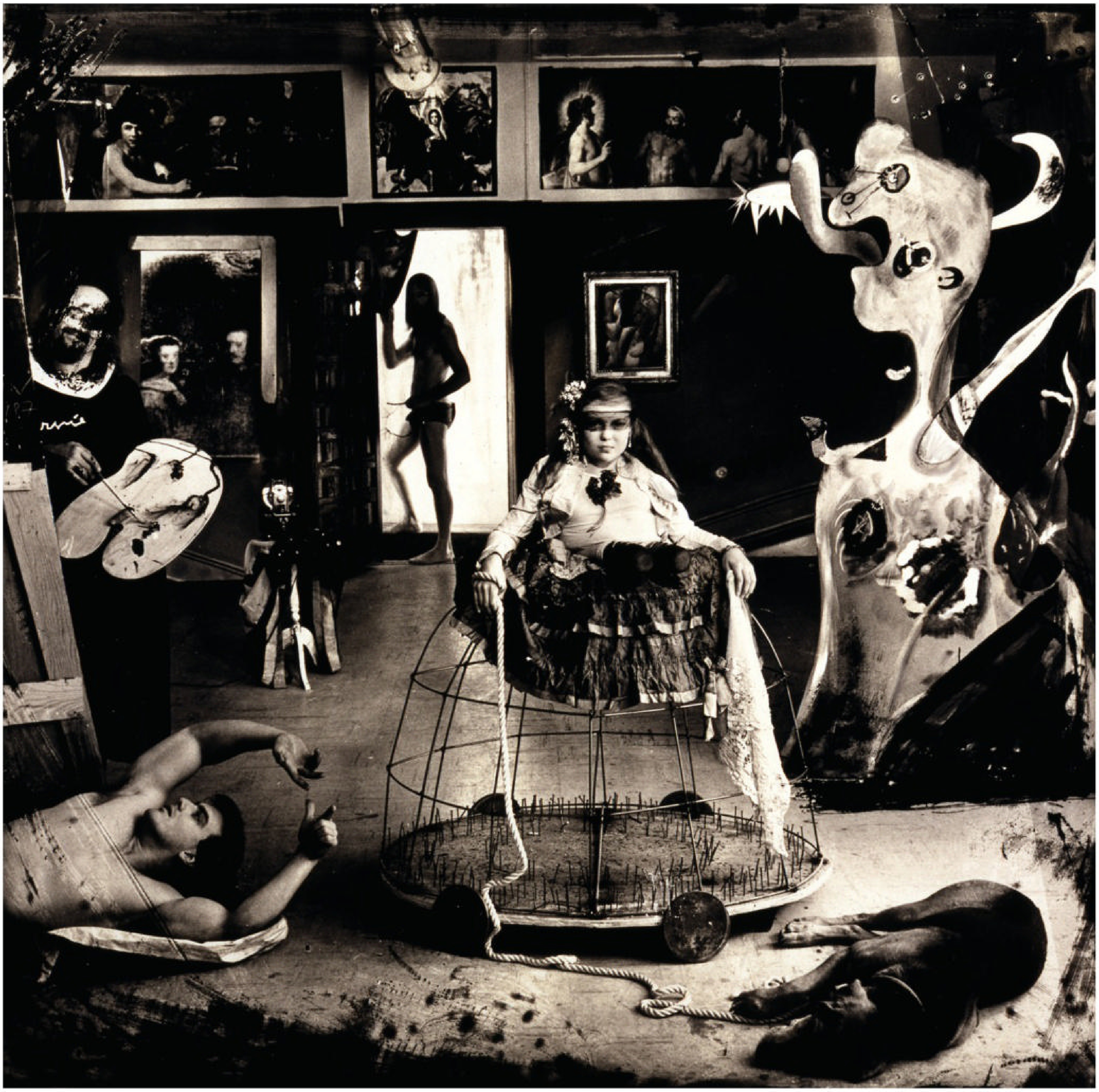

Joel-Peter Witkin's *Las Meninas,* which restages Diego Velázquez's 1656 masterpiece using live models, recalls the Italian Renaissance genre of *natura morta* and still-life painting.

JOEL-PETER WITKIN, *LAS MENINAS*, 1987, GELATIN SILVER PRINT, TONED, 14 5/8 × 14 5/8 IN. COLLECTION OF THE NEW MEXICO MUSEUM OF ART. MUSEUM PURCHASE WITH FUNDS FROM BARBARA ERDMAN, 1988 (1988.121.1).

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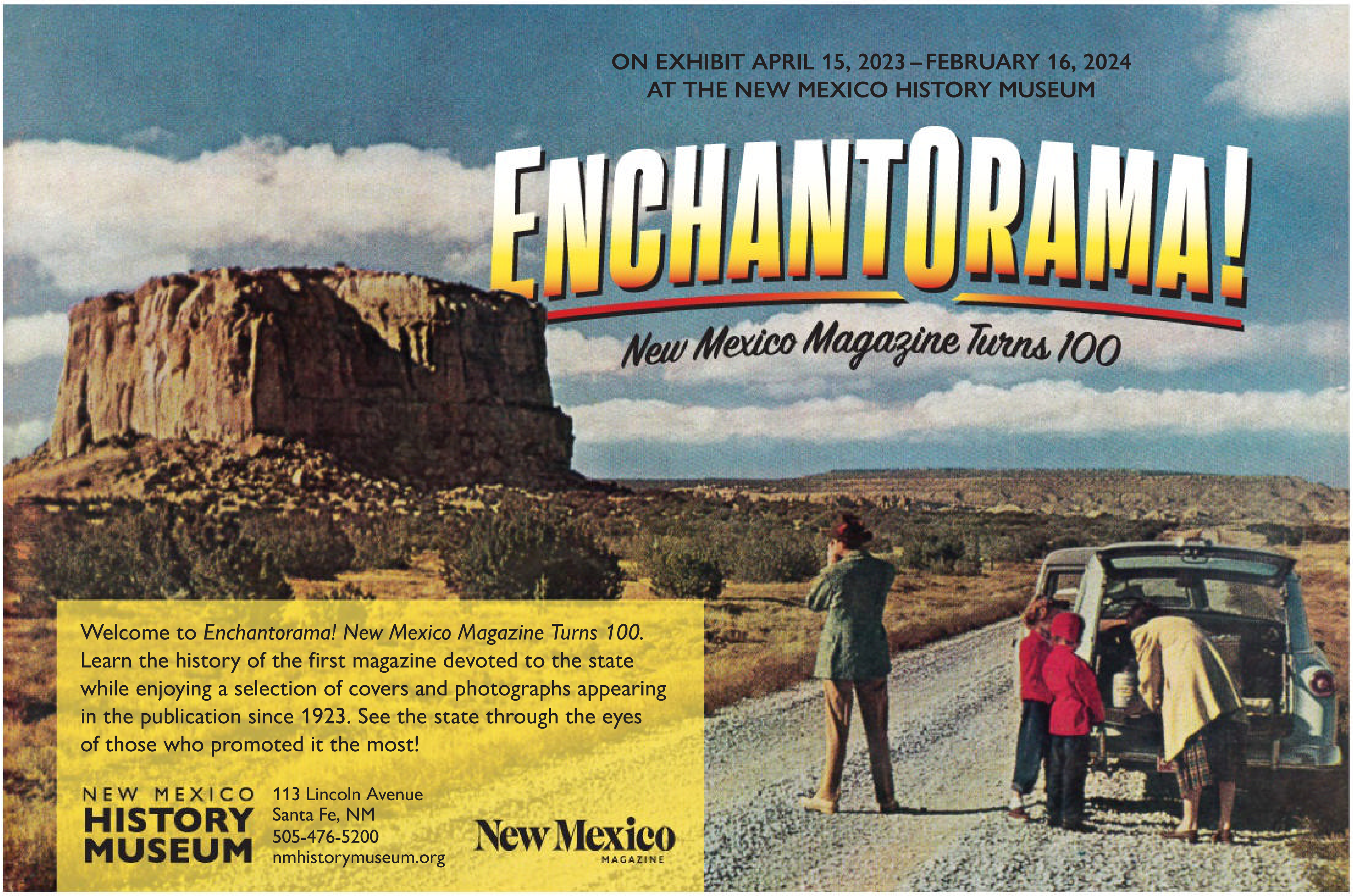
influence, artists, and styles, I complained to another curator. She suggested I write a sample review and run it by the publisher of a local arts magazine. My freelance career was off and running. Museum security leaves little room for advancement, and the pay is low. Writing was a way out.

Using my rapidly developing powers of observation, I found ways to expand on the universality I saw in local and regional art forms, and to express what I saw to a larger audience.

For example, Santa Fe sculptor and santero Arthur López creates works rooted in tradition while using the past to reflect on the contemporary moment. López, a graphic designer and self-taught artist, studied masterpieces of the Spanish Colonial santero tradition at local museums. His take on the early Christian martyr San Sebastian



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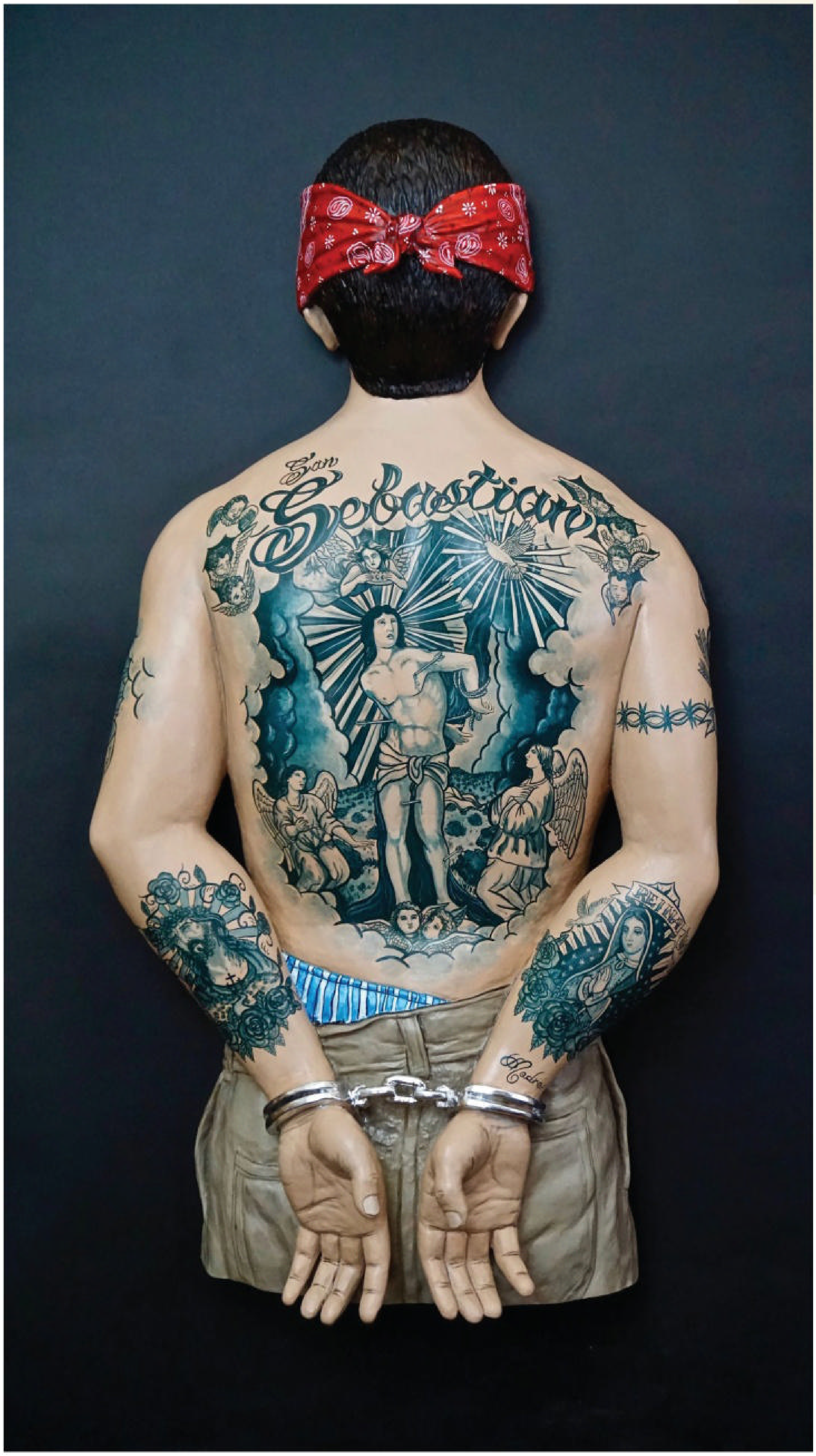


TIPS FROM MUSEUM SECURITY

Engage them about the art. You may be surprised by what guards know. They absorb a lot from museum walls and from tours with curatorial staff and guides, which guards are often required to attend. Senior security staff work more closely with curatorial, collections, and administrative staff than most people realize. If they don't know something, they'll likely refer you to someone who does.

Ask before doing. They'll be the first to tell you not to touch the art or to turn off the flash on your camera, but if you're not sure, ask. State museums in Santa Fe allow photography, but using a flash is typically not allowed: the light can damage works of art, particularly works on paper.

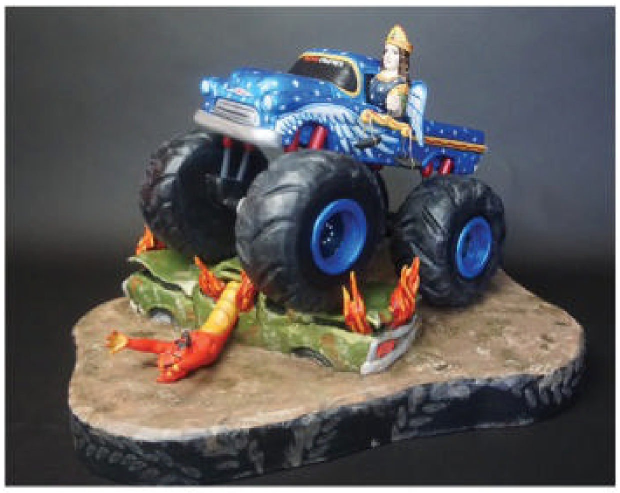
Rely on their training. Museum guards are a point of contact in the event of an emergency, often trained as first responders, and may be certified to administer aid while medical technicians are en route. They can also direct foot traffic during an evacuation. Potential security issues are addressed during the planning and execution of any exhibition.

shows up in the form of a tattoo on the back of a handcuffed norteño, carved in wood, establishing a striking image that speaks to the lasting power of religion. He's doing the same thing that Witkin is doing, only using a language that is intrinsic to Hispanic New Mexico.

But López isn't just an innovator. His work challenges the status quo. His saints walk among us: Joseph drives a lowrider across the heavens, the Holy Family in tow; St.

Left: In Arthur López's 2021 carving *San Sebastian*, the Christian martyr is inked on the back of a handcuffed norteño. **Facing page:** A monster truck rolls over evil in López's *San Miguel Devil Crusher*, 2017.

COURTESY OF ARTHUR LÓPEZ



COURTESY OF ARTHUR LÓPEZ

Benedict the Moor is depicted as a vaccine-administering doctor in the era of Covid-19; San Miguel crushes the devil beneath his wheels at a monster-truck rally. López works in an idiom that all people understand.

The public tends to view galleries and museums as a playground—and often a showcase—for the elite. Santa Fe has its share of boutique galleries. But within that local system, there's also opportunity for a talent like López to make a name for himself regionally, nationally, and internationally, which he has. An oft-repeated sentiment by artists I've interviewed over the years goes something like this: "In New Mexico, the pressure is off. I can make the work I want to make."

Remembering those words on that winter day, I felt a pressure of my own begin to dissipate. Like Wile E. Coyote, I was suspended in that moment before a fall, somehow defying gravity. I looked around at the winter day: the pastel sky, its clouds seemingly painted by a brush swirling above me in smoky tendrils, the world gleaming bright and clean.

I hauled out Moneypenny, my trusty old Pentax K1000, then stopped. I wanted to appreciate the moment. In that instant, I didn't have to be anything—not a painter, an actor, a writer, or even an amateur photographer. I could just *look*, like I did when I was a guard.

In New Mexico, the pressure's off. NM

Michael Abatemarco *is a freelance arts journalist with passions for cinema, photography, and New Mexico art.*

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Salami Shenanigans

In 1966, **RAY GOLDSTEIN** was a graduate student in Las Cruces. As a native New Yorker in the land of green chile, he was also sorely missing the taste of a good kosher salami. He told his father, a pharmacist back home, of his craving, so Mr. Goldstein wrapped one up and sent a clerk to a Brooklyn post office to mail it to his son in New Mexico. The clerk soon returned to the pharmacy with—drumroll, please—an international postal form for Goldstein's father to complete.

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Texas Baggage

DEBRA DRYER was traveling with her mother-in-law to Tucumcari when their flight to Albuquerque was canceled due to winter weather. After they were rerouted to Amarillo, Texas, Dryer's mother-in-law's luggage failed to arrive at the baggage claim. The airline assured them that the bags would be delivered to their destination. So the women picked up a rental car and headed to Tucumcari. Soon the airline called and asked where the luggage should go. Upon hearing Tucumcari, New Mexico, the agent declared that delivery service was not available to destinations outside the country. It took a little conversation and some convincing, but Dryer's mother-in-law eventually got her bag.

Deliver Us from Ignorance

In the town of Dexter, located southeast of Roswell, **J. MIERKE** ordered a cordless polesaw from Amazon. She soon found that the company refused to deliver to her location. Phone calls to correct the situation did not resolve the problem. So Mierke had it sent to a friend in Lubbock, Texas—180 miles away. Talk about a buzzkill.

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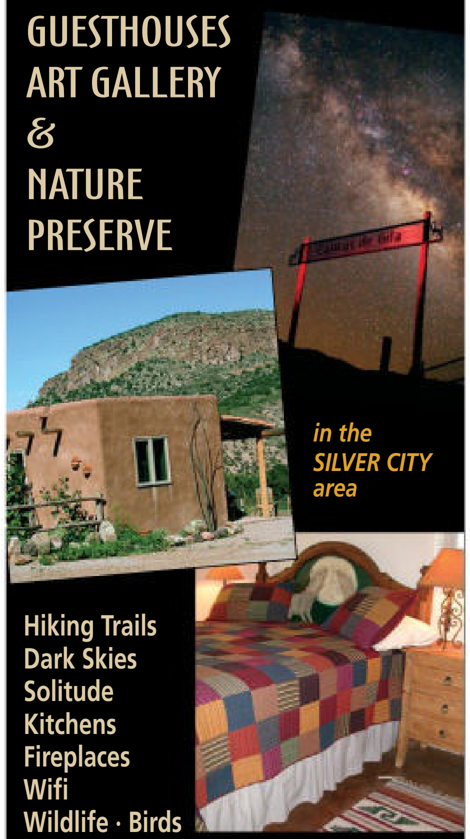

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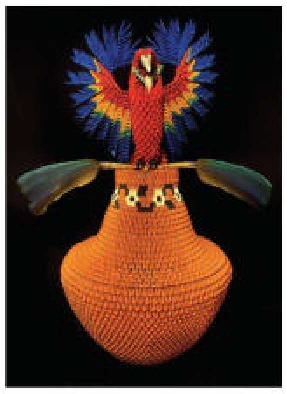

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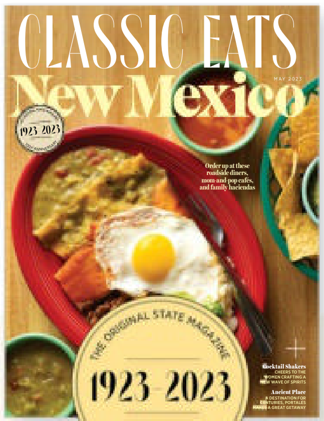

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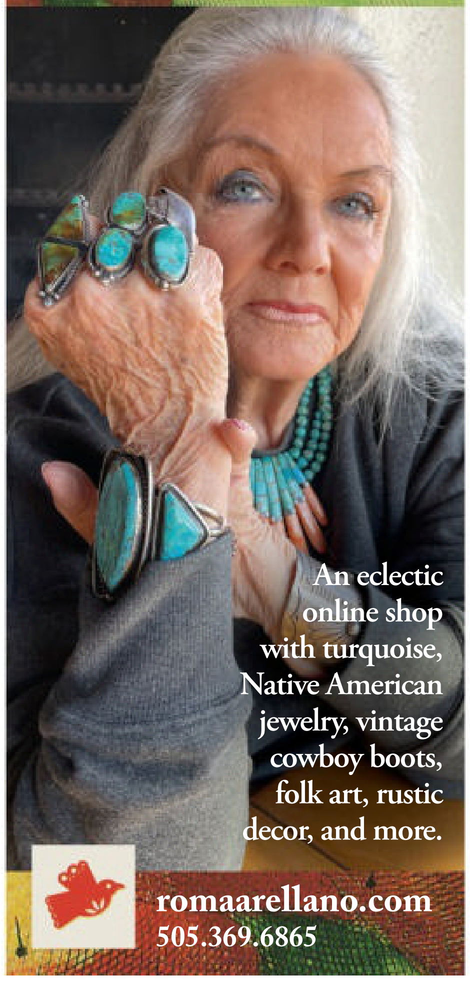

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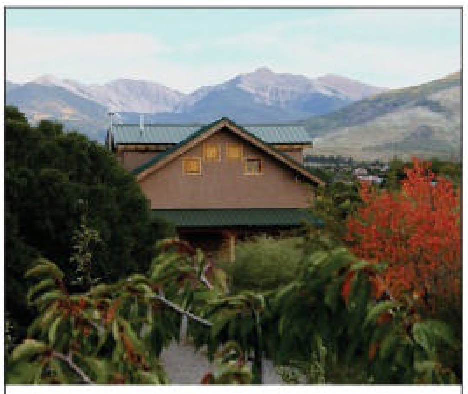

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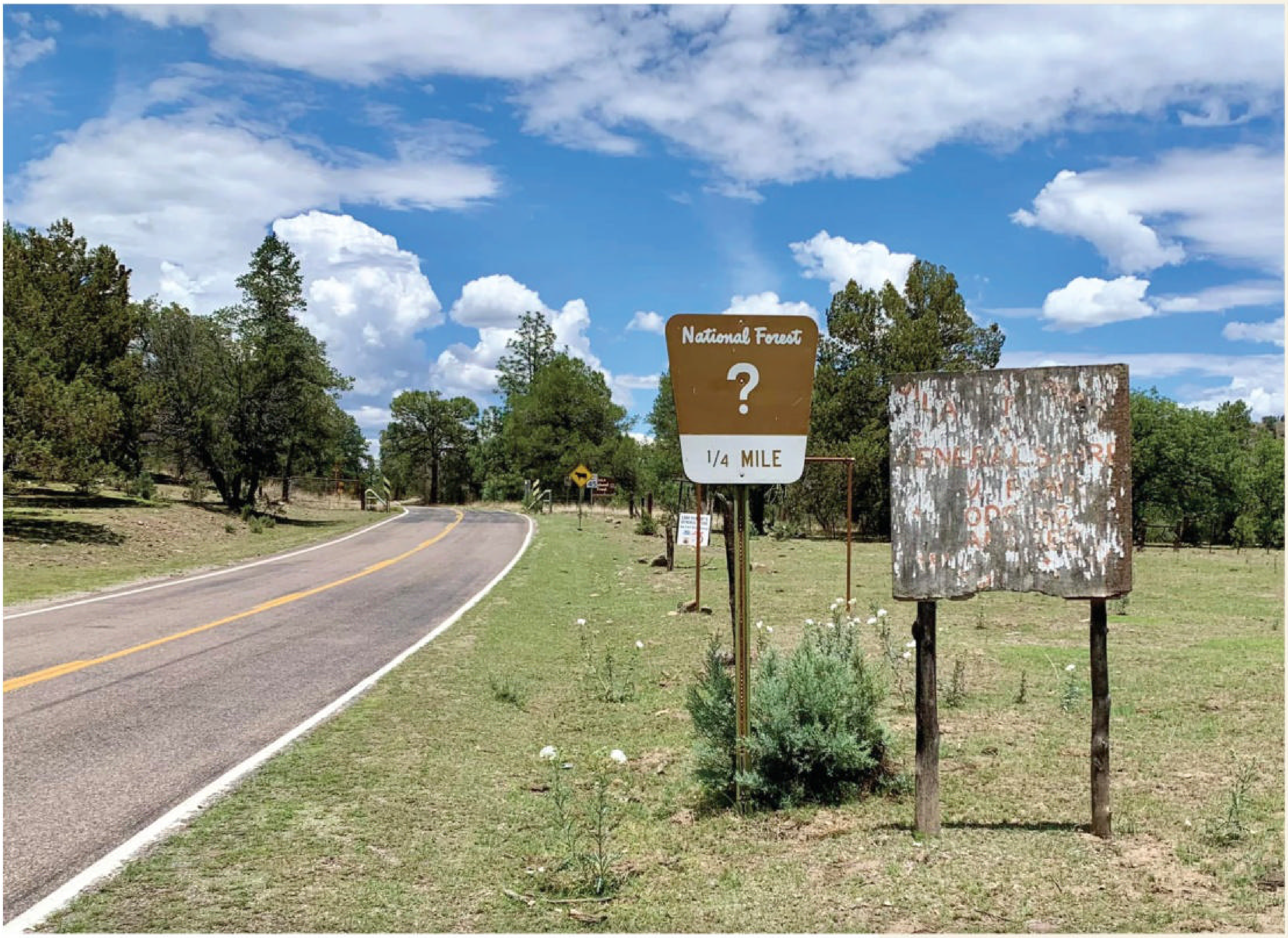
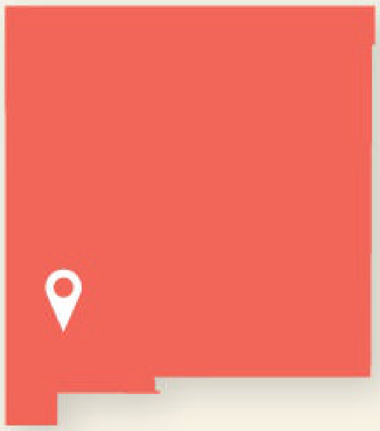


Wild Query

Along NM 35, in the southern range of the Gila National Forest, a sign shaped in the National Forest Service's trademark trapezoid bears a question mark. No words. No arrows. Just that. Puzzled? You're not alone. It's one of the questions forest rangers get at the district offices that the signs subtly point toward. "You might find that sign in multiple locations around the forest," says spokeswoman Maribeth Pecotte. "It's a national recreation symbol for finding information." In the same way that you might see a sign with a pair of hikers to indicate a trailhead, or a tent symbol for nearby camping, the question mark signifies: *Ask questions ahead.* "We're trying to come up with a universal language that tells people what we're offering without using words that everyone might not be able to read," Pecotte says. With hundreds of miles of trails throughout the Gila's 3.3 million acres, rangers encourage questions. "Anyone planning a trip will want to plan ahead and know what they're getting into," Pecotte says. "It can swallow you up. Be well prepared if you decide to visit." —*Julian Dossett*



Look for the question mark signs when you travel in the Gila National Forest. *fs.usda.gov/gila*

KATE NELSON

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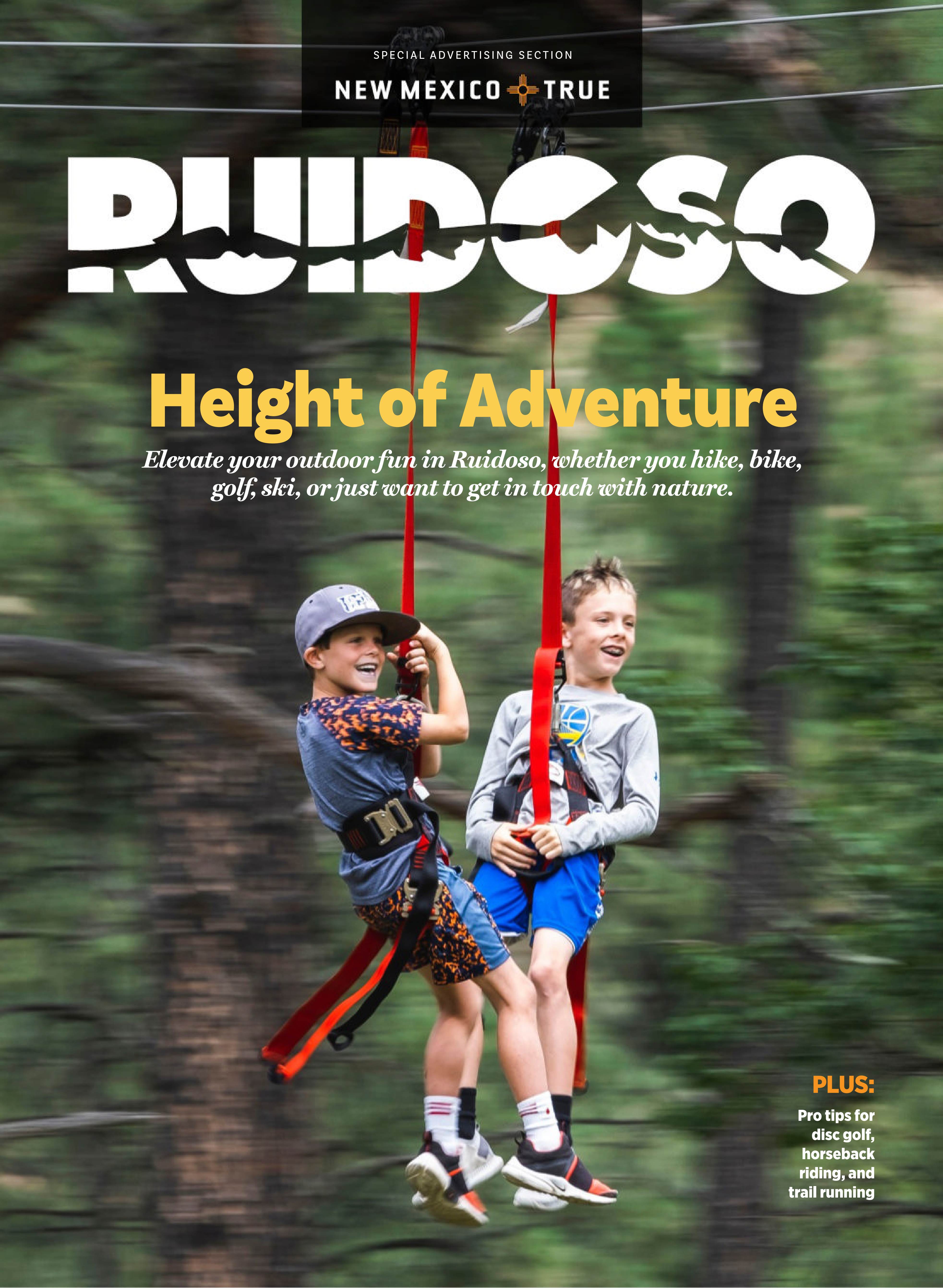

RUIDOSO

Height of Adventure

Elevate your outdoor fun in Ruidoso, whether you hike, bike, golf, ski, or just want to get in touch with nature.

PLUS:

Pro tips for disc golf, horseback riding, and trail running

Play Among the Pines

Ruidoso has become an outdoor-lovers' paradise, whether you ski, hike, bike, golf, fish, or just want to get in touch with nature.

By Kelly Koepke

Nestled as it is among the ponderosa pines and swift streams of the Sacramento Mountains, it's no wonder Ruidoso has long been known as a destination for high-altitude fun. After an easy roadtrip for New Mexicans and many West Texans, visitors arrive in a welcoming, tree-filled, and walkable destination where log cabins reflect the alpine setting, two stories means "tall," and the pace is decidedly relaxed.

Located in the shadows of the 11,981-foot Sierra Blanca and named for the Río Ruidoso (Noisy River), the charming village attracts guests with mild weather and a multitude of outdoor activities.

A full 20 percent of the village's boundary abuts the 1.1-million-acre Lincoln National Forest, which provides quick all-season access to lakes, parks, and serious mountain-grade hiking and biking trails. Skiers and snowboarders head up scenic Ski Run Road to Ski Apache's eight-person gondola and 11 lifts; summer brings adventurers barreling down mountain bike trails and one of North America's longest zip lines.

Despite its name, Ruidoso Winter Park offers year-round, family-friendly thrills, from winter and summer tubing to the state's only mountain coaster and its own zip line. The area's popular Grindstone Lake and its 18 miles of trails recently welcomed an improved boat ramp for kayaks, stand-up paddleboards, and other nonmotorized vessels. And hundreds of disc golfers descend on the five area courses, which range from novice to championship-level tournament play.

"Getting back

From left: Get your adrenaline pumping on the zip line or slopes of Ski Apache or the mountain biking trails near Grindstone Lake.

to the wilderness gives you a freedom to explore," says Wallace Downs, co-owner of Pinnacle Trails Bike Shop. "With the growing popularity of mountain biking and off-road vehicles, we're seeing a younger recreational enthusiast, too. They want to get outside, play, and be more active at all times of year."

As the owners of off-road vehicle outfitters Backcountry Attitudes, Lance and Jazmin Roe have witnessed how much fun families, couples, and friends have in Ruidoso—especially on self- or company-guided OHV (off-highway vehicle) tours. "Everybody's inviting here," says Jazmin. "That's what makes this place epic to me, because you don't get that vibe everywhere you travel."

Whatever the reason or season for visiting Ruidoso, travelers can find lodging to fit their aesthetic and budget—from rustic to full-service camping, roadside motels, mountain chalets, and upscale resorts. Fueling up is easy at faves like Grill Caliente, Cafe Rio, Cornerstone Bakery Café, Hall of Flame, and the Ranchers Steak and Seafood. A burgeoning tap-and-tasting-room scene means sipping local wines at places like Noisy Water Winery or lifting a pint at Downshift Brewing Company or Lost Hiker Brewery. Meanwhile, the Midtown district's boutiques, galleries, and other shops make it easy to take a little part of Ruidoso home.

Downs credits forward-thinking village leadership for initiatives like improving and adding miles of multiuse trails, and establishing more events like the summer kickoff Party in the Pines and AspenFest, held in the fall.

"People are surprised when they get here because they think New Mexico is only desert," says Stephanie Kennedy, co-owner of Grindstone Stables. "But we're high in elevation and offer the full mountain experience. Plus, we've got nice people, and welcome visitors with open arms to our beautiful scenery and amazing, mild weather in all four seasons."

DOWNLOAD THE APP

Explore upcoming events, create custom maps and itineraries, and get information on local businesses, museums, and cultural sites with the Discover Ruidoso mobile app.

discoverruidoso.com/ruidoso-travel-guide

LOCAL VIEW: HORSEBACK RIDING

Stable Companion

Stephanie Kennedy and her husband, Kevin, grew up ranching in eastern New Mexico. They started working at Grindstone Stables during high school and became its owners in 2009. "It was more fun to go out on guided tours and meet people than push cows," she recalls. Now, the stables are a true family operation that includes their three teenagers. Whether you saddle your own or take a guided tour, horseback riding is one of Ruidoso's most popular activities.

We have about 130 horses and rotate them throughout the year. We're set up for beginners, but our one-hour, three-mile tour is challenging enough that even people who ride often will enjoy it. We try to be informative and entertaining on the climb up to the top of Wrangler Ridge for some elevation change and nice views of Sierra Blanca and Grindstone Lake. There's even a couple of spots where you can see Monjeau Peak in the distance. In summer, we offer covered carriage rides through town and in winter, horse-drawn sleigh rides.

Riding a horse is a throwback to a nostalgic, different time when technology didn't dominate our world. You can put your kids on a horse and get them out into nature for an adventure. Maybe it's something that the parents did as kids, and now they want their kids to experience it. We get a lot of families that have been coming here for generations. It's a tradition.

Insider Tip

▸ Experienced riders looking for views can head up the Crest, Argentina, and Turkey trails. "There's not a bad view on any of these," says Kennedy. "You need serious saddle time to get there and back."

■ **From left:** Grindstone Stables makes getting saddled up a snap. Everett Brophy has helped to make Ruidoso a disc golf mecca.

RUIDOSO AREA STABLES

Grindstone Stables. Year-round horseback riding, seasonal carriage and sleigh rides. **Inn of the Mountain Gods Stables.** Four tours daily, limited to five riders per tour.

LOCAL VIEW: DISC GOLF

Course Crusader

New Mexico's Professional Disc Golf Association coordinator, Everett Brophy, designed and constructed Ruidoso's fifth and newest disc golf course, Oso Canyon on Eagle Creek, which hosted its first professional tournament this spring. He was introduced to disc golf in 2012 and turned pro in 2020.

Insider Tip

▸ Brophy's favorite hole is number 16 at Moon Mountain. A straight tunnel shot, it features significant terrain variation. "You've got to change your throw because of the wind and the elevation," he says. "There's a lot of physics of flight involved."

I've always been an advocate for recreation and believe that everyone should go outside and play. Disc golf started as an excuse to get outside with my dog and decompress out in nature. Now my goal is to win a world title.

Ruidoso, home to the largest disc golf tournament in New Mexico, with about 400 players, has truly created a disc golf destination. Whatever level you are, you can find a course.

Anybody can do it. There's also a low point of entry—no tee times, no greens fees, and 90 percent of courses are public. There's a real community of disc golfers. Ruidoso Disc Golf Club is a group of goofy, passionate players who host a singles and doubles tournament every week. Every disc golfer is super welcoming and will teach you.

ON COURSE

Ski Apache. A free, nine-hole course. Bring your own discs. **Wingfield Park.** The nine-hole pitch-and-putt course is very beginner-friendly. **Grindstone Lake.** This 27-hole course challenges players with heavy woods, hills, and water. **Oso Canyon at Eagle Creek.** The high-alpine, 18-hole mountain course features diverse shots. **Moon Mountain.** The championship-level, 18-hole course was designed by world champion Eric McCabe and features the longest hole in New Mexico at 1,345 feet.

GRINDSTONE LAKE COURTESY OF MARC STEWART

Run Grindstone Lake's 18 miles of trails.

LOCAL VIEW: TRAIL RUNNING

Speed Racer

Ruidoso has hundreds of miles of multiuse trails suitable for all ages and abilities. A runner and race organizer, Frederic Moras describes trail running as the two-footed equivalent of mountain biking.

Ruidoso is an attractive trail-running destination because the trails are all so close and not crowded. Grindstone Lake has 18 miles of trails. If you go early enough, you can run two hours and there's nobody. Cedar Creek has over 30 miles of trails. A lot of people go there because it's more accessible. The White Mountain Wilderness has 145 miles of trails.

It's cooler in the summer at altitude, and we get a lot of people training here. That's going to grow exponentially as the 10 miles of Moon Mountain trails are developed and open up.

My favorite trails are at Grindstone Lake. There's a loop on the mesa where you can see Lake Mescalero on one side, and on the other you can see Sierra Blanca. It's really gorgeous, quiet, and flat. You can see wild horses, elk, and deer—wildlife abounds. All the seasons are different—you can hear the birds, and the elk bugling. You cannot replace that experience.

Insider Tips

▸ Pick up a Ruidoso Area Trail Map. "It has all the trails marked by difficulty," says Moras.
▸ Start slow, especially if coming from lower elevations. Take water and keep hydrated.
▸ Moras recommends any of the Cedar Creek trails for runners who want a more open, close-to-town trail experience.

Where the Locals Go

Mountain Biking

Two-wheeled adventurers love Ruidoso's abundant, well-maintained singletrack and rustic backcountry trails.

Grindstone Lake. The 18 miles of multiuse trails were designed by the International Mountain Biking Association and include a pump station at the trailhead. At the top of Grindstone Lake Trail, connect to more trails to the west.

Cedar Creek. Easily accessible multiuse routes in the Lincoln National Forest top the list as the most beloved by residents and visitors. Beginner and intermediate riders rely on the wide and scenic T121 Lower Jerryatrics and T121A Upper Jerryatrics trails for their fast, fun downhills. Backcountry enthusiasts head for Smokey's Revenge, a one-mile downhill flow trail with banked turns, drops, and jumps.

Ski Apache. Ride the gondola to the 11,500-foot Gazebo or "The Top," then bike down 5.5 miles to the base area on all-downhill flow trails graded between 6 percent and 8 percent. Put on the brakes for some breathtaking views of the Sierra Blanca range, too.

Hiking and Running

With 300 miles of trails within walking distance or a short drive of town, hiking and running enthusiasts can find everything from flat paths to steep grades.

Eagle Creek and Alto Reservoir Loop Trail. This easy, 2.2-mile trail circles the water and passes a waterfall. You'll likely see more wildlife than people, so watch for wild horses and bald eagles.

Grindstone Lake. The trail system attracts hikers, runners, and dog walkers for its convenience, large parking area, and sights of the reservoir. Circumnavigate the 6.7-mile Lake Loop or the easier 1.8-mile Fisherman's Trail for both mountain and water views.

Cedar Creek Recreation Area. With exercise stations, a picnic area, and nearby campgrounds, Cedar Creek's 1.3-mile T90 Fitness Trail makes a convenient entry point to the Lincoln National Forest and is located just minutes from town.

Off-Roading

Bring your own dirt bike or ATV, or rent an off-highway vehicle (OHV) to explore hundreds of miles of wilderness trails designed to get you into the backcountry on two, three, or four wheels. OHVs are street legal in Ruidoso on designated roads.

Río Bonito Trail Loop. The 3.7-mile route rewards adventurers with scenic vistas on steep grades near Alto. It connects to the Petroglyph National Recreation Trail, where ancient rock art awaits.

East Mesa Trail. Share the road with horseback riders on this 9.9-mile, moderate point-to-point route in the Fort Stanton Snowy River Conservation Area. With scenic landscapes and a modest 700-foot elevation gain, this drive is especially beautiful in spring and fall.

Eagle Creek Canyon Road to Forest Service Road 120. Wind through high mountain trees and meadows, eventually topping at Hightower Mountain (7,333 feet). From there, a variety of roads and trails

From top: Rev up the fun with off-road adventures. Take a dip at the Wibit Water Park. **Opposite page:** See the sights on two wheels.

are open to explore, connecting on the far side with US 70 and back to Ruidoso.

Fishing and Water Sports

Ruidoso's reservoirs and rivers mean anglers and water sports lovers can splash, boat, and paddle all day.

Grindstone Lake. The floating, inflatable Wibit Water Park, with slides, towers, trampolines, and swaying bridges, is a summer attraction for kids of all ages, and a complement to fishing, paddle boarding, kayaking, and boating activities. The Dam House supplies boat rentals and fishing equipment from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Trout, anyone? Anglers hook rainbows at both Alto and Grindstone lakes, either from the shore or from nonmotorized boats. Seeping Springs Trout Lakes guarantees you'll catch at least one trout or your visit is free, making it a perfect destination for families with kids.

Ruidoso Municipal Swimming Pool. The waterslide and life-guarded sessions attract families for lessons, laps, and splashing, with season passes that can include the Wibit at Grindstone Lake.

Wildlife and Scenic Views

You don't need to venture far to see an abundance of furry or feathered wildlife. Keep an eye out for deer, elk, and even bears strolling down the main roads.

Grindstone Mesa. Hikers and runners who access the 3.3-mile loop trail via the hills and switchbacks of the Alfred Hale or North Grindstone connectors are rewarded with spectacular views of Lake Mescalero and Sierra Blanca.

Monjeau Lookout. Drive Ski Run Road to Forest Road 117 for panoramic views of the White Mountain Wilderness and Lincoln National Forest, along with abundant wildlife. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the stone fire tower was reconstructed in 1940 by the Civilian Conservation Corps and is still in use today. Road closed for winter? Adventurers hike the last mile.

Moon Mountain Open Space. Hiking boots and a camera are a must to experience more than 600 acres of open space just minutes from downtown. See deer, coyotes, wild horses, and various birds in their natural habitat.

Need for Speed

Already known as a draw for families, Ruidoso Winter Park adds a new thrill ride for 2023.

During the winter, several feet of natural and man-made snow create steep, fast chutes for tubing down the mountain. Afterward, magic-carpet lifts ease the route back uphill. Summer means tube-racing down artificial snow, with a thrilling, 300-foot zip line course situated 30 feet above the crowd.

This year, the all-season **Screaming Eagle Mountain Coaster**—the only mountain roller coaster in the state—joins Ruidoso Winter Park's roster of fun.

Almost a mile long, the Screaming Eagle boasts 5,100 feet of dips, curves, and a dizzying, 360-degree sideways corkscrew. Riders strap into their carts at the bottom of Sierra Blanca, then glide up through the trees for a gravity-assisted thrill ride of a descent. The two-seater carts can reach a top speed of 25 mph, satisfying even an adrenaline junkie's need for speed. Meanwhile, a state-of-the-art collision avoidance system means everyone rides safely.

"Screaming Eagle rivals the coasters in Durango, Copper Mountain, and Vail," says Tom Dorgan, owner of Ruidoso Winter Park. "It's a great ride, and a fun time for parents and little ones, who can ride together."

Reservations recommended year-round.

RUIDOSO WINTER PARK

121 Ski Run Road, Alto
575-336-7079
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Plan Your Visit

May 20
RIDE RUIDOSO SPRING THUNDER

Complementing the AspenCash Motorcycle Rally, Ride Ruidoso Spring Thunder features a car show, a bike show, runs, food, and live entertainment, including headliner Molly Hatchet.

rideruidoso.com

June 17–18
PARTY IN THE PINES & BREWDOSO

Wingfield Park hosts live music, food, and plenty of fun as part of the annual Brewdoso Beer and Wine Festival.

brewdoso.com

July 21–23
52ND ANNUAL RUIDOSO ART AND WINE FESTVAL

Art lovers come for a juried fine-arts show in a broad spectrum of mediums. While shopping collectible art and jewelry, enjoy local wine tastings and craft beer.

discoverruidoso.com

September 11–17
RIDE RUIDOSO WEEK

A benefit event for motorcyclists, including concerts, bike and car shows, a tattoo contest, pin-up contest, and other events at Wingfield Park.

rideruidoso.com

September 15–18
GOLDEN ASPEN MOTORCYCLE RALLY

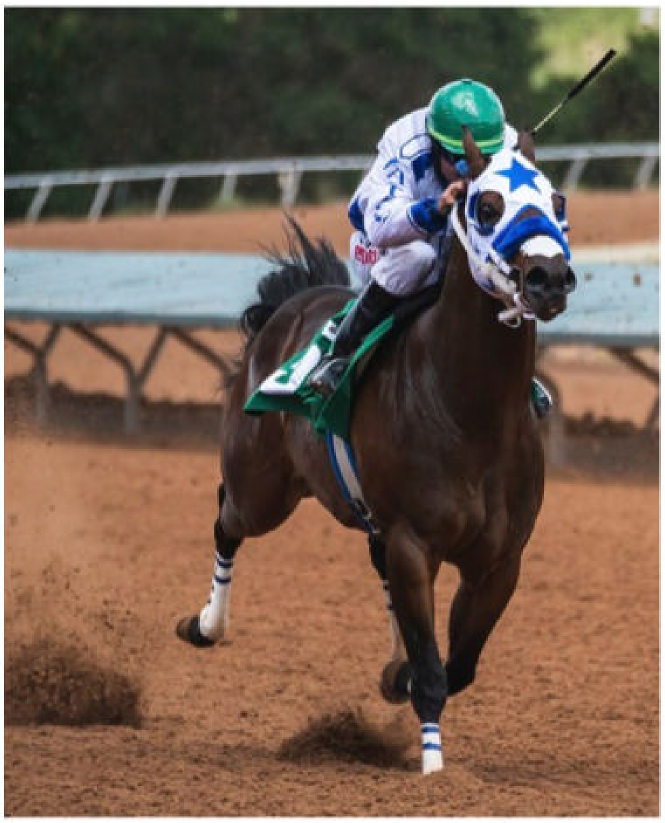
A 53-year tradition, the Golden Aspen Motorcycle Rally attracts 20,000 leaf peepers and motorcycle enthusiasts to the cool, colorful mountains.

motorcyclerally.com

October 7
RUIDOSO ASPENFEST

Celebrate autumn with a parade of cool cars and decorated floats through Midtown, followed by fun, food, and music at Wingfield Park.

ruidosonow.com/aspenfest



From top: Ruidoso lights up the holidays, especially for the Christmas Jubilee. Ruidoso Downs Race Track hosts the World's Richest Quarter Horse Race, the All American Futurity, as well as many special events throughout the year.

November 10–12
RUIDOSO CHRISTMAS JUBILEE

The holiday celebration includes 80 local merchants, storytellers, dancers, carolers, and a reindeer trail to celebrate the season and raise money for charitable groups in Lincoln County.

ruidosochristmasjubilee.com

February 2024
VINES IN THE PINES

Foodies and wine lovers sample New Mexico wines and brews while enjoying local arts, crafts, food, and vendors over two days at the Ruidoso Convention Center.

discoverruidoso.com

March 2024
OUTDOOR EXPO

Get outfitted by exhibitors showing the best of the best for the season ahead.

ruidosoparksandrec.com

April 2024
BUNNY RUN AT CEDAR CREEK

The annual Bunny Walk/Run and Easter Egg Hunt includes prizes, free fire-truck rides, and special appearances by the Easter Bunny and Smokey Bear.

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